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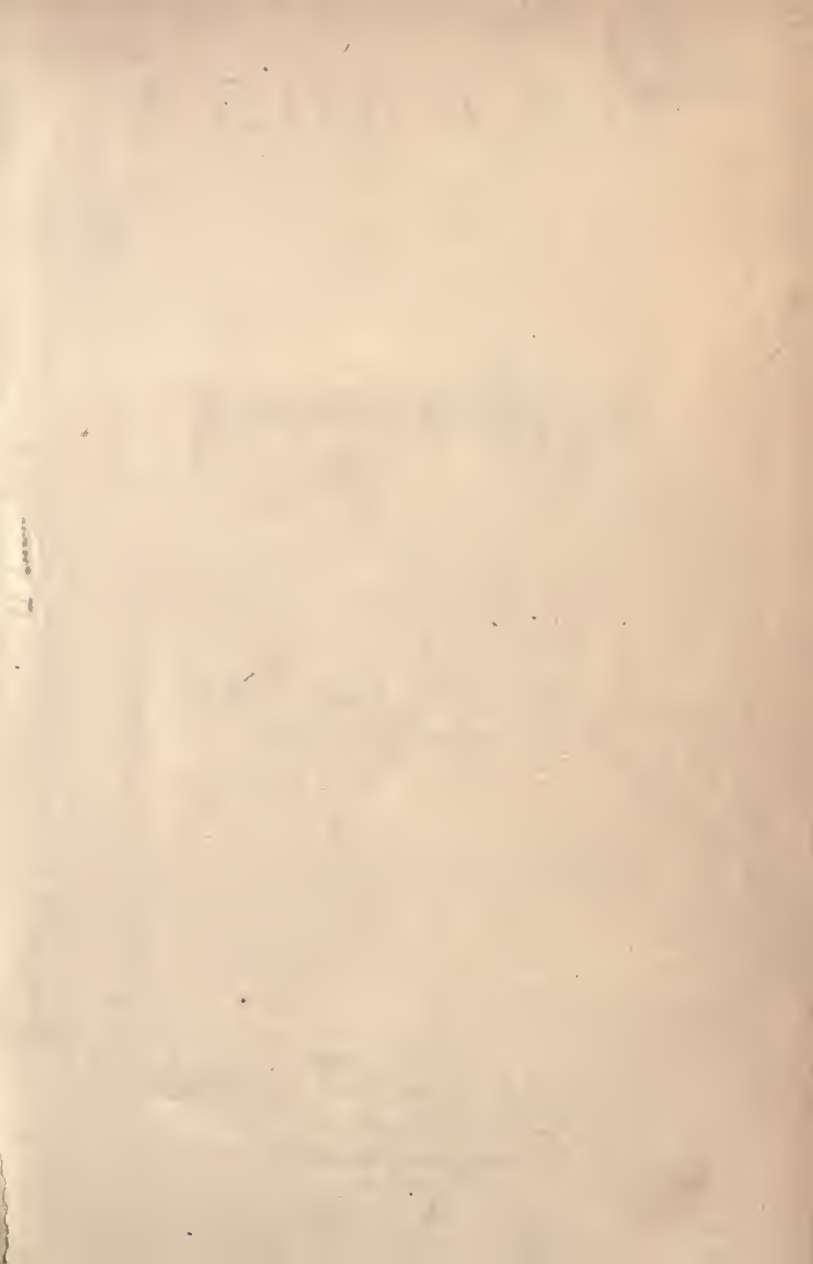
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ALDEANE.

A NOVEL.

INV. 1898.

BY LAURA PRESTON

AUTHOR OF "IN BONDS," ETC.

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ALDEANE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. NEVINS DECLARES HER POWER.

THOUGH the wind without blew its shrillest blast and the snow came ceaselessly, while the bitter cold pointed each flake with ice as it fell, the inmates of the mountain farm-house heeded it but little, so deeply were they engrossed in their own thoughts and pursuits. It was a wildly-stormy night, but not more fierce were the winds that ruled it than the thoughts of some who gathered in the comfortable sitting-room around the blazing fire on the hearth-stone.

There are times when the warring of the elements seems the signal for the rending asunder of bonds of duty, or custom, and especially for the deep bitterness of injured hearts to find vent in passionate words. Thus was it upon that tempest-ridden night in which our story opens.

There had been an unusually large quantity of work to do upon the farm that day, and at best an estate of Massachusetts acres is not easily managed. It was, perhaps, because of that, and a foreboding of the toil that would come with the snow-clad morrow, that Jonas Nevins wore upon his ever-scowling brow a frown of unusual severity, and sat moodily by the fire gazing into the glowing coals.

He was not at any time a pleasant man to look at; there were too many harsh and cruel lines upon his sal-low countenance; his small gray eyes often flashed too fiercely beneath his heavy brows; and, above all, his nervous lips were too deeply sinister in their ever-changing curves. But with all this, he was not an ugly man; so far as regular features, luxuriant iron-gray hair, and a tall, well-knit figure could make him so, Jonas Nevins was a handsome man.

So thought his wife, a fair-haired woman of thirty-five, who sat opposite to him, glancing at him furtively sometimes, but appearing to be almost totally engrossed by her knitting.

That night the face of Mrs. Nevins was one worthy of more than passing notice. Not for its beauty—though it was evident that she had once been beautiful, though care and grief had long striven to deny it—but for the expression of determination that rested upon her thin lips and strangely contrasted with the meekly drooping eyes, and the almost timid glances that turned from them upon the stern occupant of the opposite chair.

I have described first, the elder members of this fireside group, performing thus my easiest task; far beyond description by a few poor words were those others—young Arthur Guthrie and his sister Aldeane.

Equally beyond such description were they, although most strangely unlike. The boy was tall, dark, and strong in appearance, while the girl was exceedingly fair and delicate, and, although but three years younger than her brother, presenting a strange contrast of childishness in comparison. He was then about fifteen, and, in spite of a growth verging already upon six feet, was still but a boy in appearance. There was much of the uncouthness belonging to boyhood on his well-knit figure, and of boyish beauty in his smooth, dark face, shaded by black, loosely-curling locks. His eyes were bent upon

his book; but when, at last, he raised them for a moment to glance at his sister, they were revealed in magnificent accord with the tropical beauty of his face. They were truly glorious eyes; large, black, and fiery; thoroughly expressive of the strong, proud spirit of their possessor. They were eyes that had gained for Arthur Guthrie the implacable hatred of his step-father, for they, though his tongue had been guarded well, had revealed the distrust and scorn in which he held him.

But, although Jonas Nevins hated his step-son, he did not, could not, hate the child who sat by his side. As I have said before, she was fair and delicate, and this, with the perfect grace of her figure, seemed at first her only claim to beauty. Her eyes were indeed softly brown and tender, but it was only under the influence of some strong excitement that they became beautiful. But in her pensive moments, and they were many, there stole over the countenance of Aldeane Guthrie a rare expression of peaceful hope, which irradiated her plain features with an almost divine light, and, in the heart of her mother, gave her the name of the "Peace child."

And in that house she was the "Peace child," not only in name, but in fact. More than once had she unconsciously quelled the evil passions of Jonas Nevins and the fiery temper of her brother; but on this night, in blissful unconsciousness that such influence was needed, she bent over the book from which her brother was also reading, his dark cheek almost touching hers.

They were evidently oblivious of the time, for they did not even glance up when the clock struck nine. Not so, however, was their step-father, who had for some moments been surlily watching them, and who then said, roughly:—

"Are those children to stay up all night; are they never going to bed?"

"Yes, it is now time," replied Mrs. Nevins, quietly.

"Arthur Aldeane, did you not hear how late it is? Are your lessons ready for to-morrow?"

"All ready, mother," returned Arthur, collecting his books, and, for the first time, observing the unusually moody face of his step-father, while Aldeane lighted the bedroom candles, and bade her mother "Good night."

She murmured the words to Mr. Nevins also, but he did not appear to hear either her voice or Arthur's, and, trembling with cold, each hastened across the wide hall, and up the stairs into their own rooms, leaving their mother to a task which was to decide their future.

But they knew nothing of that, and were happily asleep before one word was spoken in the room below. Indeed, for a full hour, Jonas Nevins sat silently before the fire, and his wife steadily knitted on, waiting and preparing her answer for the words she felt certain he would speak.

And she was not wrong, for when she had grown almost weary of waiting, he looked up, frowningly, and said :—

"Have you thought of that matter I spoke to you of? Have you thought of what is to be done with that boy? for, by heavens, he shall not stay here to madden me with his insolent eyes."

"No, he shall not stay here," she said quietly, "but we will not speak of him first; we will speak of my daughter."

"Your daughter!" he said with a sneer.

Mrs. Nevins raised her eyes to his face and said firmly. "Her daughter then. The daughter of my sister, whose heart you broke."

She saw him turn deadly pale, but over his well-trained countenance passed neither an expression of terror or surprise, and presently he laughed as he said :—

"I suspected that before. I thought that boy and girl could not be the children of one mother. But how can she be the child of your sister, whose heart I broke? Where did I ever see your sister?"

"In her home," she answered firmly, though there was something in his look which caused her heart to beat wildly. "You knew her in North Carolina, where she died."

"How many times more shall you tell me the woman is dead?" he asked. "But how was I to see your sister in a place where I never was?"

"But where was — —?" She arose and whispered a word in his ear,

The utterance had evidently shocked him fearfully, though he still strove to hide it from her.

"What do you mean?" he said with a forced laugh; "what are you prating and whispering about?"

"The truth," she said, as quietly and firmly as ever. "It is useless for you to deny your identity or your guilt. I have proof, overwhelming proof, of both."

Then, for the first time, she saw him give one sign of fear. "Proof! proof!" he gasped, "there can be no sign of proof!" and then he cursed himself, his folly, and her.

"I have the proof," she reiterated slowly. "I have proof enough here to award you a punishment a thousand times more severe than you drew upon that innocent man twelve years ago. A thousand times more severe than the law could ever levy on him."

He sprang up furiously, and threw his hand heavily upon her shoulder.

"Let me see what you have," he cried, with a horrible oath. "Give it to me, or I will kill you to get it."

"You could not wrest it from me by killing me," she answered, as unmoved as ever. "My death would be the signal for the mine to explode beneath you."

"I have a mind to risk that," he muttered, releasing her then, however, and catching up a paper she threw upon the table.

It was not long nor closely written, but in the few moments it took him to become master of its contents, Jonas Nevins, outwardly, at least, became a changed man.

He beat his brow with his open palm, and groaned in an agony of fear, then suddenly he turned to his wife, and besought her not to ruin him, to believe him penitent, to spare him, for God's sake to spare him.

Then, for the first time, she lost her calmness. Then she broke into bitter invectives and terrible threats, and still the miserable man bent down before her and prayed her to spare him.

It was some time before she would answer a word to that. "You are in my power," she said. "I can crush you with a wave of my hand. Living or dead you are in my power. Where do you think are the originals of those papers I have copied for you?"

"With—with *him*, perhaps," he said.

"No," she returned, incautiously, "I would to God they were, that I could find him anywhere upon the earth, to give them to him. But they are safe."

"But you can have no object in using them against me!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Your only object would be to clear his name, if he were living to need it. But think, think at what a price you would do it now."

"The price is nothing," she said, "the gain is every thing."

"For that child," he said.

"For that child," she answered him.

I have said that Jonas Nevins was in form and feature a handsome man, but I have not before said what power of expression those features held; that night his face had been almost demoniacal in its hate and rage, but after these words it softened into almost heavenly tenderness.

"Ah, the child! the child!" he said, "if you could but prove your words, the gain would, indeed, be great for her; but you can not, you know."

She did know it. She had ever known that the proofs she held were not so complete as she had said. They might convict him, but there was great danger they would not.

She knew this, and he had grown cool enough to know it too.

"No," he continued coolly, "there is not proof enough here to justify any jury in returning a verdict against me, but there is enough to prejudice an ignorant community, and still not enough to give that child her rights."

His wife was almost stunned by this sudden exhibition of calmness, but she was determined not be baffled by it.

"That proof would do more than you will admit," she said; "but as he can not be found, I have no wish to use it against you, if you will do your duty by his child, and by mine."

"By yours," he cried passionately, "I will do nothing for him. I hate him. Take what you like for her, but nothing for him. Not one cent, not one crust of bread for him."

"You have all that once was mine," she said. "You have all save the pitiful sum I would not take from him. That shall not be used. You shall buy my silence. You shall educate my son."

Oh! with what hate he looked at her, and at the papers he held. "There is enough here to ruin, if not to convict me," he thought, and then he told her she should have what she wished, that he would educate, and clothe and feed her son. "And may his learning be his curse," he said passionately. "May his clothing make him a leper, and the food poison him."

Mrs. Nevins smiled derisively. "You must give me a bond," she said. "I will not take your simple word."

"I will sign no bond, that would be equal to a confession," he answered; "and you shall hold no such weapon as that against me, woman."

But she was inexorable and conquered. He read the bond she placed before him, and would have signed but she stayed his hand. "The witnesses," she said, "the witnesses. We must have witnesses to this."

She called in two servants who were passing through the hall to their rooms. They wonderingly saw the master sign his name, and then affixed their own to the document, of which Mrs. Nevins immediately took possession.

“And now, ‘good-night,’” she said, when they were gone, “and remember whether I live, or die, you are in my power. I shall send my children away next week. Attempt to injure them, and forgetful of all save the disgrace of that innocent man, and my sister’s wrongs, I will set the hand of the law upon you, and you shall be known for the villain you are.”

In another moment he was alone.

The very air seemed full of horrors. He could not for some moments move from the spot in which she had left him. His face lost the last trace of defiance, and became ghastly white. He sank into a chair at last, and cowered over the fire, that sunk first into a mass of glowing embers, and then whitened into cold ashes. Yet still he sat there. The rats played noisily around the wainscoting, and the mice nibbled industriously in the closet, but he heeded them not. His past life, of which he seldom thought, and never without the utmost horror, was standing before him, all its days blackened by a crime, which had blotted out one young life, that he had loved as man never loves but once. In his heart there had been one green spot, but the hand of Cain had scared it. Love enters once into the heart of every man. It had crept into that of Jonas Nevins, and by its unblessed ardor had cursed it forever. All those things arose before him, as he sat regardless of the cold, with which he shivered, or of the time, that on the sable wings of night was hastening to open the golden gates of morning.

At last he muttered, almost inarticulately, “Good God, that she should know it! What a fool I have been never to have destroyed those cursed letters! They have

ruined me; it must have been fatality! But I will destroy them to-night, before I sleep!" and seizing the candle he passed into the hall and was soon groping his way up the garret stairs. The wind blew out the candle, and shivering with cold and superstitious fear, he returned to light it, but found not one live ember. At last a light was procured, and he again ascended the stairs. The garret was a large open place, and the candle could cast but a flickering light over its gloom. A rat ran over his feet as he entered. The place, to his heated imagination, seemed peopled with horrible demons, and he shuddered as he heard his footsteps break the stillness.

He hurried to a corner of the room, and nearly stumbled over some dark object. He stooped to examine it. It was a small iron box, the lock was broken, the contents were gone, save a little strip of paper. He held the candle up before it, and with half-frenzied brain saw written, in a hand that he had well known in by-gone years, and which he had hoped never to see again, the sentence: "Retribution is hastening upon thee."

"O God!" gasped Nevins, "What can this mean!" and, sitting down on an old trunk, he gave way to the deepest emotions of horror and fear. At last he arose and began to search in all the corners and crevices of the room for the missing papers, but all in vain. His candle flickered in the socket, and he was obliged to desist.

The box was there—but the papers, the proofs of his guilt, were gone.

CHAPTER II.

COUNTERPLOTS.

ABOUT fifteen miles south of the mountain farm-house, and at nearly the same distance from Boston, stood a handsome residence, well known in the vicinity as Rose Cottage, and although in the winter season it appeared to have no claim to the name, as early as the month of June until late in the autumn, it became most appropriate.

But even when devoid of its summer garniture Rose Cottage was a handsome building, its walls of gray stone, ornamented with fanciful windows and piazzas, and surmounted by small turrets, rose grandly above the snow, appearing to offer shelter and comfort from the cold and storm without. Even the grounds presented none of the desolation common to most gardens during the winter of a northern clime. There were few straggling shrubs to bestrew the snow with dry, crisp branches and unsightly stalks, but rich, ever-verdant hedges of holly, bestrewn with their scarlet berries, encircled the dwelling and its appurtenances from the desolate waste of snowy fields without, and stately cedars guarded it from the shrill winds and induced hundreds of tiny, busy winter birds to trill their soft notes within their branches, and to keep around Rose Cottage one ceaseless reminder of the by-gone summer.

Some three weeks after the memorable night on which Mrs. Nevins had declared to her husband her power, a gentleman walked thoughtfully up and down one of the

most pleasant of all the pleasant rooms of Rose Cottage. It was known as "Mr. Ashton's room" and was neither parlor, smoking-room, nor library, but partook of the character of all, for there were elegant articles of furniture on every hand, cases of books between the windows, and smoking materials on every table. Besides which there were pictures on the walls, guns in every corner, and numberless indescribable articles on every hand. At first sight, one would have declared it the lounging apartment of a wealthy bachelor, but its possessor was in fact a widower, having but little to remind him of his one short year of wedded life except a daughter, the portrait of whom hung over the mantel and seemed to watch him with its laughing blue eyes as he walked slowly to and fro.

Most naturally this daughter was the darling and pride of his heart, and often he paused and glanced fondly at the portrait. It bore a striking though softened likeness to himself. The large blue eyes were identical in color and expression, the long flowing curls of the child were of the same golden-brown hue as his own luxuriant hair, the well-defined features were softened models of his own, but the tiny rose-bud mouth was a beauty peculiar to the face of the child, the beauty that with her voice and smile she had inherited from her dead mother.

While Mr. Ashton was still pursuing his thoughtful walk, a light tap sounded on the door of the apartment, and an old woman, evidently the housekeeper, obeyed his summons to enter.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," she said, "but there's a man here that wants to see you."

"Show him in," answered Mr. Ashton, who made it a rule to see every one that asked for him, and a few minutes later a tall, rough-looking man entered, and bowing to Mr. Ashton said, "I have come at last, sir."

"Why, Foley!" exclaimed Mr. Ashton. "What have you done to yourself? Shut the door and sit down by the fire; it's a bitter cold day."

The man did as directed, looking sharply around him like one accustomed to observe every thing.

"And now," said Mr. Ashton, "what have you got for me?"

"It may be much, or it may be nothing," replied the man doubtfully; "but she seemed to think 'em a good deal."

"She!" exclaimed Mr. Ashton, "Whom do you mean?"

"She as found 'em after I had been peerin' and pryin' through that house for more 'n three months. Just my luck to watch him and watch him and gain nothin', while she, who suspected nothin', stumbled right on the whole proof at once."

"Who stumbled upon it? Speak more plainly, man!" interrupted Mr. Ashton impatiently.

"Why, his wife, sir! his wife. She went up to the garret one day, and by accident like I happened to go up the stairs and stand by the door. There wasn't any thing happened for a while, and then all at once, when she was in a dark corner of the place, I heard her cry out sharp and low, like one surprised and horrified, and then I saw her lift a little box, and rush to a window with it, and then she cried out again and said,—

"'My God! this was his.'"

"And then for a long time she just stood still and looked at it, and then in a frantic way she tried to break it open but it was iron and would not yield. But she thought herself alone in the house and cared for nothing. She took up a bar of iron that lay there, and I swear to you, sir, I couldn't have done it myself, she wrenched open the lid with such force that the contents flew far and wide."

"What was in it?" asked Mr. Ashton breathlessly.

"Papers, sir, papers! Nothing else as I saw. And that woman, sir, crouched down by the window and read 'em as if she was going mad, and called out, 'Oh, my sister! my poor murdered sister,' in a way just fit to make even a detective's heart break."

"What!" cried Mr. Ashton. "Is that man's wife her sister. It can not be, the very stones would have cried out against the enormity of such a marriage."

"It appears 'twas quite accidental," returned the man composedly, as if thus to account for the silence of the stones. "She met him on the road somewhere. Probably he didn't know her, any more than she knew him, and he was kind to her sick child. She was a good-looking woman, with the signs of money about her you see—and he was a deceivin' villain, and so she married him."

"Poor woman! poor woman!" ejaculated Mr. Ashton.

"And you may well say that," said the detective, in his passionless voice. "A poor woman she is in more ways than one, robbed of her money, health, and peace. But though those letters seemed to break her right down when she read 'em first, they gave her the upper hand of him. She put 'em all back but one. I've got 'em here. But that one mastered him I'm safe to say, for the next night I was called in to witness some bond between 'em—I'd just got those letters safe into my pocket with a string tied round 'em—and the next week her two children was sent off to school. He'd bought her silence, you see."

"That relieves my mind of a heavy weight," said Mr. Ashton. "'Twould never do for the matter to be brought forward now. But where are those letters."

The detective took from his pocket a small parcel and handed it to Mr. Ashton. He opened it hastily, and took out four short notes which he read attentively.

"These prove something," he said, "but not much. Not much. She has the missing link in the chain of

evidence, the only one of much importance. We must have it. I will go to her."

But the detective interposed in his ever-quiet voice. "Mrs. Nevins wouldn't turn traitor to her husband, sir, until he does to her. And you wouldn't want to ruin an innocent woman by implicatin' her in his crimes I s'pose?"

"Of course not. But that letter I must have."

"All in good time, sir, when you're ready to bring the suit on, for instance. She isn't a woman to be terrified out of it, and it's as safe with her, or rather with Lawyer Halcombe, for I traced her there the next day, as it would be with you."

"But I must have it!" reiterated Mr. Ashton.

"Very well, sir," returned the detective, "but you'll only make an enemy of a friend by forcing that paper from its present possessor, for she looks upon it as the guardian of her children. If I was a lawyer, sir, I should say 'bide your time,' but as I am only a detective, sir, I'll get the paper for you if you like."

"No," said Mr. Ashton, after a long pause, "I see the wisdom of your advice. The cause at any rate must be ours. It would be ours even if that paper was destroyed. You have left the service of Nevins, I suppose."

"Yes, sir," answered the man with a short laugh, "was took uncommon bad after findin' the letters, and couldn't stay. Good servant though. Go back at any time. No policy to quarrel there you know."

"Then I have nothing to do but pay up my arrears," said Mr. Ashton, "and wish you a better job next time. You'll bear this matter in mind though, and be ready when called upon."

"That I will, sir," answered the detective, counting the coin Mr. Ashton laid before him, and shortly thereafter bowing himself out, to partake of a lunch in the house-keeper's room, before setting out for Boston.

When left alone, Mr. Ashton re-read again, and again,

the letters which had been given him, and at last laying them in a small iron box, placed them in a safe, saying to himself, "Rest there for a time, and then we shall see, Mr. Nevins; we shall see."

For a second time on that morning were his reflections disturbed by a knock upon the door. He opened it, and took from the hand of a servant a number of letters. Glancing hastily over the address of each, he broke the seal of the smallest, fondly murmuring, "My darling," and smilingly perused the missive. But the smile soon faded away and a look of eager attention succeeded. "Most remarkable! really extraordinary!" he muttered more than once, and yet the words which caused them were but few and simple.

"My darling father, I have such a delightful thing to tell you," began the second paragraph of his daughter's letter. "Mrs. Grenville has given me such a nice roommate, and I like her already so much better than I did that cross Jennie Grey that was here last year. And she has such a pretty name, Aldeane Guthrie, and though she isn't so pretty as some folks, she has such a *magnificent* brother, and his name is Arthur. And, pa, what do you think, Aldeane lives only fifteen miles from our house, but I don't think she'll go home again soon, for she has a step-father, and I know he's hateful. And I know I heard you talking about him to some man once, when you were angry, and sent me out of the room for going in without knocking, and I am very sorry I did it, pa, I am sure, and his name is Nevins, and——"

But Mr. Ashton read at that time no farther, but gave utterance to a variety of expressions of astonishment.

"And this is as it ought to be," he said at last, "and I'll see these children; and befriend them too. What an extraordinary thing that they should be placed at that school. There must be a providence in it. At any rate I'll see them."

CHAPTER III.

ARTHUR'S EARLY CAUTION.

AND Mr. Ashton kept his promise. He did see those children. Not immediately, but after Belle had written enough of them for him to know them well, and even then he did not yield to his first inclination to make a pretext for seeing them at school, but when Rose Cottage was worthy of its name, and the glorious summer had made all the surrounding country beautiful, he had written to his daughter to bring them home for the vacation. And after some hesitation, knowing that the doors of their own home were virtually barred against them, they had come, and enchanted Belle by their enjoyment and admiration of her lovely home, and her father by their own charms of appearance and manner.

Belle Ashton was right in saying that her father loved Aldeane Guthrie from the first moment he saw her. There was something about the child which irresistibly attracted him. It was the same with most people, but he did not know that, and with wonder questioned himself as to what it could be in her face or manner that so powerfully influenced him.

He fancied at times that the face and manner were not altogether unfamiliar to him, and yet he was certain he had never seen the child before, and at last referred to the apparent familiarity, by the real sympathy by which he was attracted toward her and which led him to feel and act toward her as an old and attached friend.

And this feeling was increased by the knowledge he

gained of her during three vacations subsequently spent at his house, for never once during that period had Mrs. Nevins dared to have her children home, and, except upon rare visits to Boston, she never saw them.

I have said never, but once, indeed, Arthur ventured within what was indeed to him a lion's den, and that was when, having finished the course at Professor Grenville's he hesitated as to following his mother's instructions, which were for him to enter college at once, for he remembered that his paternal fortune was extremely small, and that Aldeane was altogether unprovided for, and although had he been alone in the world he would not have doubted for a moment what course to take, he thought it now a duty which he owed Aldeane to retain sufficient property to secure her from want, and therefore he determined to see his mother and learn her reasons for advising him to expend all, or at least the better part of what he possessed, in securing an education. True, up to this point—and far beyond it—he had ambitiously desired to fit himself for the practice of law, and he knew his mother held the same views for him, but prudence whispered that it would be better for Aldeane to live in peace, beholding her brother a merchant's clerk, than to struggle with poverty, while he was endeavoring—vainly, perhaps—to open a way to fame and affluence through long years of penury and obscurity.

This, in substance, he said to Mr. Ashton one evening, during the second vacation spent at Rose Cottage, and announced his intention of going home to ascertain the exact position in which he stood. This Mr. Ashton highly approved, and offered him the best horse in his stables for the journey.

At break of day he was in the saddle, bearing a hopeful, joyous heart and Aldeane's tearfully given love toward his mother. The sun rose apace, and threw the scorching heat of August upon the earth, but Arthur's

road for the most part lay through the woods, and he found the ride delightful, and with the enthusiasm of boyhood thought of the beauty around him, and of little else until familiar objects claimed his attention and assured him that he was drawing near home. There lay the little village of Hayfield toward the right, and conspicuous among its humble dwellings arose the white-spired church in which he had so often sat beside his mother and sister, listening wearily to the prosy discourses of good old Elder Maynard, and there, a little farther on, was the tall finger-post, pointing spectrally toward Boston, and the village behind, and lastly arose in the distance the tall chimneys and the gabled roof of the house he had for ten years called his home.

He did not remember, then, how little of a home it had been to him, or how the childhood which might have passed joyously within it had been made a period of constant terror and gloom, nor did he think of him who had occasioned this, but with the word Mother upon his lips, as it was within his heart, rushed into the hot kitchen in which, through an open window, he had seen his mother toiling.

Poor soul, how overjoyed she was! how she embraced him and wept over him! This was the one sole drop of joy that had sweetened her bitter cup for months, yet even as she tasted it she looked around with sudden terror that it would be dashed from her lips.

Arthur noticed it with a pang at his heart that showed its presence in his face, but he would not speak of it. The time was not yet come to dwell upon sorrow, for his mother, in a low voice, was rapturously exclaiming, how tall he had grown, and how handsome, and how good, too, she was sure. And then, with sudden fear, she asked for Aldeane. Was she ill, or what had brought him here?

Arthur answered smilingly that Aldeane was quite

well, and becoming such a scholar, and was so much loved. Why, he believed that it would break even the strong heart of Professor Grenville if she should speak of leaving him, and then he added more gravely, "But I came here on especial business, mother. Is Mr. Nevins in?"

"Yes," she answered, her color coming and going painfully. "Upon almost any other day, darling, I would have had you all to myself, for he seldom is at home now."

"Who takes care of the farm, then?" was Arthur's natural question.

"Oh, you know," answered his mother, with a little flash of pride, which, to one, knowing her history and that of the man of whom she spoke, was most curious to behold, "Jonas Nevins was always too much of a gentleman to care for the details of a farmer's life, but he is a very excellent business man."

"Yes, I believe that," returned Arthur, with satisfaction, for he hoped from his mother's tones that a better feeling subsisted between her and her husband than formerly. But she divined this, and quickly undeceived him.

"He certainly is doing well by the property I was foolish enough to intrust to him," she said, "but I doubt, my love, whether it will ever do us any good."

"I should not think he would acquire much wealth from a rugged farm like this," said Arthur.

"Oh dear, no; but he sold a part of it just as you went to school, and drew that money I had invested in Durkin's firm just before our marriage, and entered into speculations, in which he is still engaged, and which have proved exceedingly remunerative."

"That is fortunate, mother; but now about my own affairs," and he repeated at some length what he had already said to Mr. Ashton, concluding, "And now, mother, you have told me often, that by my father's will I was left five thousand dollars, to be given into my

hands when I arrived at the age of twenty-one, and that meanwhile I was to be educated and supported from the other share of the property."

"You are quite right, my son," she answered.

"Does Mr. Nevins understand this?" asked Arthur, looking intently at his mother. "And does he understand that this same matter of support applies to Aldeane, although she was not mentioned in my father's will?"

"She was not born until some months after his death," faltered Mrs. Nevins.

"Of course, mother, I know that; but does Mr. Nevins understand what he is bound to do for me, and expected to do for her?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Nevins, firmly, though her face was very pale; "he understands all, perfectly, and he is pledged to fulfill his duty. He is pledged, I say," she repeated, with excitement, "and if I were to die to-day, you and Allie will be safe."

"How, mother?"

She looked around her furtively, and drew closer to him. "He is in my power," she whispered eagerly. "Dead or alive he dares not deceive me. I have that written by his own hand that would arise to condemn him. Hush!"

She turned suddenly away from him, leaving him pale and startled. The cause of her warning was soon apparent—a man's step was heard upon the porch.

Arthur knew it was Mr. Nevins's; he had trembled too often upon hearing it not to remember it well. "I will go and speak to him," he whispered to his mother, and left the kitchen.

Mr. Nevins was prepared to see him. Arthur saw that at once, but was somewhat surprised to see that this preparation had not angered, but had rather softened him.

"How do you do?" he said, in his old ungracious manner, though his dress at least was far more like that of a

gentleman than Arthur had usually beheld it. "I was not aware that your mother was expecting you," and he cast a glance the reverse of pleasant in the direction of the kitchen.

"She did not expect me," returned Arthur, extending his hand, which was coolly accepted. "I came quite unexpected by her, to see you perhaps more particularly than herself."

"Ah!" said Mr. Nevins, looking at him rather curiously.

Mrs. Nevins came to the door, and looked at him from behind her son with a glance which he seemed perfectly to understand, and which he was powerless to avoid.

"Ah!" he repeated once more.

"Yes," returned Arthur. "Of course I need not remind you of the terms of my father's will, and that they applied as well to his unborn child as to myself."

"Ah!" repeated Mr. Nevins in a strange voice, glancing curiously at his wife.

"Now, sir," continued Arthur, respectfully, "I ask you if you intend, of your own free will, to carry out the terms of that will?"

"Your mother tells me," answered Nevins, with quiet sarcasm, "that you are to be a lawyer; if so, you should by this time be lawyer enough to know that you can compel me to observe the terms of that will."

"That is not to the point," returned Arthur, quietly; "and even if it were, you may readily suppose I would not waste my little patrimony in litigation. Now being, sir, by your words, obliged to refer to the unhappiness which has existed between yourself and my mother, I ask you if, through it all, your honor leads you to do this act of justice to her children, which is their right, but would be esteemed by them a favor?"

Nevins looked at him for some moments with motions

upon his face which even the quick eye of his questioner could not clearly read.

"You have a bold face and a ready tongue," he said at last. "You will make a good lawyer; and as I have told your mother before, I am perfectly willing you should become one. Your bills, and Aldeane's, will be duly honored."

He looked at his wife, and bit his lips till the blood started. "I am going to Boston," he said suddenly, in the midst of Arthur's acknowledgments, and, without a word more, or even a nod of his head, he descended the steps and walked to the stables.

Presently they saw him gallop down the road.

"I am so glad to have you to myself!" said Mrs. Nevins fondly, leading her son into the sitting-room. "You will stay here to-night, darling, and sleep in your old chamber."

"Yes," said Arthur, thoughtfully; for though his interview with his step-father had terminated much more agreeably than he had dared hope it would, he still had the painful consciousness that Mr. Nevins had consented to do his duty under compulsion, and not of his free will; and more than once that afternoon he spoke of rejecting his aid altogether, and of taking his chances in the world with no further preparation than he then possessed.

But his mother actually shed tears when he spoke of this, and, before he parted from her upon the following morning, made him promise that he would abandon the wild idea.

And upon his return to Mr. Ashton, that clear-headed man of business echoed his mother's advice, and a month later Arthur Guthrie entered college.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FACES AND NEW FRIENDS.

AFTER the slight break in the monotony of Arthur Guthrie's life, it glided on for three years quite as tranquilly as that of his sister Aldeane. Both, in their different ways and different places, were students who understood all the importance of the tasks set before them, and encountered all difficulties with a will to conquer them, and thus when Aldeane Guthrie, at the age of sixteen, carried with her to Rose Cottage, the diploma she had won, she was perhaps the most finished scholar that ever was graduated from the Greenville Academy. Not even then, that she was a prodigy of learning, or was possessed of a vast number of accomplishments, but the good professor remarked of her, with a pride he could feel in but few of his pupils, that what she knew at all, she knew thoroughly and certainly, and was so much impressed with this, that knowing something of her domestic life, he offered her a situation as junior teacher in the academy in which she had been so long a pupil. And with the intention of accepting this unexpected favor, she returned after her school-days to spend another vacation at the home of her still dear friend, Belle Ashton.

The latter had grown more beautiful with every year, and, at the age of eighteen, presented a striking contrast to her more humble companion. She was above the average height, and of full and commanding figure, upon which her own taste, and the wealth of her father, enabled her to display rich and elegant costumes, which, as well

as the blonde beauty of her face, seemed to separate her completely from the plainly dressed figure which was generally to be found at her side. Yet in this figure, and the face belonging to it, there was a certain beauty, such as had marked her childhood—a beauty not so showy, observers remarked, but which would certainly prove more lasting than that of the belle and heiress, Miss Ashton.

They said of the latter, too, that she was a good-natured, handsome girl, but that for a half hour's sensible chat her little friend was infinitely to be preferred, and that if one would hear a sonata well played, or a song well sung, Miss Aldeane Guthrie would certainly do both for you if asked in a secluded room, where her touch and her voice were in no danger of being destroyed by the gaze and the comments of an admiring throng.

So those two friends, so different yet so loving, had each her certain reputation among their schoolmates and friends, and especially among the few young people who had shared and brightened their holiday times.

Chief among these had been a young gentleman named Morgan, the only son of a neighbor of Mr. Ashton's, who had not only been a friend and playmate of Belle from her babyhood, but Arthur's friend during his term at college. Having graduated the year before, and since that pursued the study of medicine, he was about to depart for Europe, partly to continue his studies at the different capitals there, and partly to make the grand tour for his especial pleasure.

Rather unfortunately for any scheme of professional improvement that might have been in the mind of Frederic Morgan, his proposed companion was devoted, wholly and confessedly, to pleasure. He was a young gentleman from Canada, the nephew and heir of a Mr. Raymond, an old and esteemed friend of the elder Mr. Morgan. Until this summer, when he came to Morgan-

vale to make the acquaintance of his future traveling companion, George Raymond had passed the greater part of his life in severe study, and almost entire seclusion. This, Frederic Morgan said, accounted for some few habits of marked eccentricity, especially one which led him to shun society, especially that of ladies.

But it so happened during that summer, that the three young people at Rose Cottage, and the two at Morganvale, were thrown much together, and were obliged to depend almost entirely upon each other for society, and thus much of the reserve of George Raymond was destroyed, and his true character was somewhat manifested, at least to one of the group, and that was Aldeane Guthrie.

Frederic Morgan had told her that George Raymond was the son of a gentleman, who had died in Brazil, and that at an early age he was adopted by his uncle, and that he was destined to become the head of the well-known firm of Raymond and Company. To this little history George Raymond never added a word. Yet there was, at times, and chiefly when he was self-absorbed, an expression upon his face which led Aldeane to believe he could have added much.

But she never spoke of this to her brother, and never to Belle but once, and then the latter laughingly said, his was just the face for romantic girls to idealize, or connect with some horrible mystery.

Yes, it was just such a face, so dark, so eager, so lighted up by flashing black eyes, or so shadowed when the long silken lashes drooped over them. It was truly a wonderful face, not only in beauty but expression. How strong it always was, how fierce at times, and often this also when he was self-absorbed—how vengeful, yet how sad.

Aldeane Guthrie had watched for a month or more these varying expressions, and had learned to know them

all, when one evening there came into his face one that was utterly new—perhaps to her face, perhaps to her only.

Belle Ashton had been bantering her old friend upon the probability of his bringing a wife from Europe, and he had laughingly replied that he should be too much engaged in study to think of such a thing, but that doubtless his friend Raymond would bring home some fair creature to be the envy and admiration of all her transatlantic sisters.

“I,” exclaimed the young man, suddenly looking up, “I shall never marry.”

“Why not,” cried Frederic Morgan, while the young ladies glanced at him in surprise.

It was then that Aldeane Guthrie saw that strange, new expression rest upon his face. It was one of abject loathing. Of what? of himself? of marriage? He did not say. But the expression had been upon his face, and though a mischievous smile immediately succeeded it, Aldeane had seen it and it haunted her for days.

“Oh, I see you were joking,” said Frederic Morgan, after a moment’s pause for his answer, “but I warn you not to speak such heresy before the ladies, it won’t do, will it, Arthur?”

“I must confess,” said the latter, “I am surprised at it, after hearing the unbounded admiration he expressed for your cousin a short time ago.”

“Miss Greyson is certainly very beautiful,” said Mr. Raymond quietly.

“And so your cousin has arrived,” cried Miss Ashton, turning toward Frederic Morgan. “What a tiresome creature you are not to have told me about her before, when you know I am so anxious to hear all about her! Is she pretty?”

“You have heard Raymond’s verdict,” returned her friend, provokingly evading a direct reply. “Now do,

Belle, spare me the task of eulogizing a young lady, who is my father's ward, and therefore may, for a long spinsterhood, be left to my tender mercies."

"You provoking creature, I don't believe you admire her a bit!" cried Miss Ashton, with perhaps not so much indignation at this circumstance portrayed in her face as perfect generosity would have admitted of.

"Indeed I do," returned Morgan somewhat more seriously. "I think her a beautiful little creature; as pretty—yes, quite as pretty as that wax doll I once gave you."

"Your memory must be excellent," returned Belle with a blush and a smile.

"Oh, it recalls to me events even more distant than that," he replied teasingly; "I can remember quite well when we one day played truant together, and being lost in the woods, were about to make ourselves a living edition of that picture over the table, and the robins were actually thinking of looking for leaves to cover us with when—"

A firm pair of white hands over his mouth, and then a struggle with the possessor thereof, during which every one laughed a great deal, except Arthur Guthrie, who for some reason looked very red and not at all well pleased.

And this often occurred at such times during the remainder of the vacation, without his at all knowing why or any other person appearing to notice it. He was particularly fond of Frederic Morgan, who as his senior in college had often been of great service to him, and he admired his companion, but he was undeniably pleased when he bade them farewell upon the deck of the steamer that was to bear them to Europe upon the day before that in which he returned for his last year at Harvard.

"And, oh dear, I'm dreadfully lonely!" sighed Belle Ashton upon the evening of that day, as she sat alone

with her friend in the empty parlors, looking out upon the moonlit scene, and Aldeane Guthrie echoed the words in her heart and bent her eyes that none might see the tears that glistened in them.

"Do you know," said Belle, after a silence which for her was very long, "do you know, I don't exactly like the companion Fred has for his travels? Mr. George Raymond may be very handsome, and very rich, and very excellently educated, but there is something about him I don't like."

"Why surely you can have no fault to find with him?" asked Aldeane, in her usual ready defense of the absent. "I am sure he is a perfect gentleman."

"Oh, I have nothing to say against that," replied Belle, "and of course you should defend him, for he is very like your brother," and then she blushed vividly, and laughed as if in some slight confusion.

"I do not think him at all like Arthur," answered Aldeane, "except that both are dark. But now that you have spoken of it, Belle, I will own that there is something about Mr. Raymond that puzzles me, and that I really wish he had not gone with Mr. Morgan."

"Mr. Morgan would doubtless thank you for your solicitude," replied Belle, laughingly, and then she suddenly approached her friend, knelt down beside her and clasped her arms about her waist.

"Speaking of Frederic Morgan" she said softly, looking somewhat doubtfully into the eyes of her friend, "I have a secret to tell you."

"A secret," asked Aldeane wonderingly, and then as she noted the changing color that came and went upon her face, she added archly, "can it be, dearest, that he has taken your heart with him?"

"Oh, no," she replied with a quick laugh, "but it is something you will think much worse than that; he has taken the portrait you had taken for me in your gradua-

tion dress. Pray don't be angry, love. I *really, really* told him I couldn't, *wouldn't* spare it."

Aldeane Guthrie dropped her face upon her hands as if in sudden fright, and presently raised it crimsoned as she said, "It was wrong, very wrong, Belle. He would not have dared to do it, if you had not encouraged him."

"He left an equivalent," returned Belle demurely, as she arose and kissed her friend, "he really did, he was so conscience-stricken" and dropping a small ivory case in her lap, Belle glided from the room.

Aldeane Guthrie trembled as she looked at the little case, and not daring to open it, nor to leave it for other eyes to see, hastily placed it in the pocket of her dress.

But hours later, when she had tremblingly looked upon the bright, handsome young face portrayed within, it found a safer resting-place—a place among the few treasures possessed by her—and who shall say but that it was the most precious of them all.

CHAPTER V.

SMALL CHANGES AND ONE GREAT CHANGE.

Six uneventful months passed by. During that time Arthur Guthrie pursued his studies, and Aldeane was a teacher in the school in which she had been so long a pupil. She was contented with her work in life and pursued it steadily, seldom yielding to the temptation which existed for her to draw painful contrasts between her own dull round of duties, and that of pleasure followed by her friend Miss Ashton.

For though the one was a poor teacher and the other a beautiful heiress, they were friends still—the dearest and the best, and it was Belle's greatest pleasure to spend the long Saturdays in Aldeane's little room—the same they had for so many years shared together, or to take her for a long drive into the country, where they could talk together cheerfully of the happy past, or hopefully of the future.

Then there was the Christmas week passed with Arthur at Rose Cottage, what a happy time that was! what a break in the monotony that seemed to settle for the winter blankly upon her! and then to be broken in the spring by an interruption, that was as sudden and terrible as a thunderbolt.

A telegram was placed in her hands one blustery morning in March, containing but six words: "Your mother is dying, come home," and in an hour later Aldeane Guthrie, almost wild with apprehension and dismay, was seated in a stage-sleigh and was on her way to her unloved home.

Unloved, and yet so eagerly looked for. "Your mother is dying, come home." How the words burned into her brain; and then she wondered why they had been sent to her by Dr. Bronson instead of Mr. Nevins, and then her heart failed her at the idea of meeting her cold, stern step-father, and then as she thought of her mother, was overwhelmed with grief at her condition.

It seemed an age to the anxious traveler, ere the well-known village appeared in view. It was indeed evening and almost dark, so early had the gray twilight hidden in its cheerless cloisters the sunbeams that had vainly struggled with the wind and sleet for existence. It was about ten minutes' walk from the village to the farm, but although Aldeane was almost benumbed with cold, she was preparing to start briskly forward; when some one touched her, and looking up she saw Arthur, unusually pale and grave, standing beside her. "I hoped, almost expected, you would be here to night, so I came to meet you," he said as he stooped to kiss her, then turned away struggling with emotion, absently folding Aldeane's shawl closer around her, for she shivered in the cold evening air, and with a feeling of undefined alarm.

"How is mother?" she queried anxiously, as she observed his emotion.

He drew her hand within his arm, walked on a few steps, and then answered, "Aldeane, she will never feel sorrow or pain again. I trust our mother is in heaven."

The announcement of death, no difference how gently it may be imparted, or however well we may consider ourselves prepared for it, always falls upon us with a shock. Especially did it upon Aldeane, for unconsciously during her solitary journey, she had been treasuring hopes that her mother's danger was exaggerated, and that a daughter's loving care would eventually restore her to health. When, then, she heard that she was dead, it seemed as if the cold March wind had swept all the

brightness and joyousness away, and that life was like the drear, snowy waste before her. Tearless sobs shook her frame, which perceiving, Arthur endeavored to change to a more healthy flow of tears, by recounting the last moments of the departed. He had received a message the previous afternoon from the same hand which had penned her own, and taking the evening stage had arrived that morning to find her unconscious—dying of an attack of brain fever.

For hours he remained beside her, hoping for one look or word of recognition, and at last he was rewarded. Suddenly she opened her eyes, called his name, whispered brokenly, "The paper, at Mr. Ev——" and immediately expired.

The doctor and Arthur were alone with her at the time, and Aldeane amid her grief was glad that this was so, that the man who had darkened so many years of her mother's life was not present to cast a shadow upon her peaceful death.

By this time they had reached the house, and striving to compose herself, Aldeane suffered Arthur to lead her into the sitting-room in which we first saw them, and there standing before the fire was Mr. Nevins.

He started as Aldeane entered, apparently unable to recognize her, but when she said, "Mr. Nevins, I am Aldeane Guthrie," at the same time extending her hand, he took it mechanically, while his face flushed crimson, as he looked upon her. He answered curtly her inquiries concerning his welfare, and pointing her to a chair by the fireside, left her and Arthur alone, saying he would order some refreshment for her. His manner was almost kind, and as she sank upon the seat he had designated, she asked herself the question, "Have we not judged him too harshly? Perhaps it is only his manner, his heart may be good."

At this stage of her reflections, she was interrupted by

Arthur, who forced her to drink a glass of wine, for she was looking exceedingly pale and haggard, and indeed she was quite faint from inanition and fatigue. She soon laid aside her heavy wrappers, and endeavored to eat of what Arthur placed before her, knowing well that she needed strength for the many trials that it would yet be her lot to pass through. But when she thought of her, who would have welcomed her home so gladly, lying pale and inanimate in the chamber above, her rising tears and sobs choked back the food, and it was with difficulty, after having eaten a little, that she could persuade Arthur that she was ready, and able to look at the dead.

After a little, they ascended the cold staircase, through which the wind was whistling, just as it used to do in by-gone years, and stood without the death-chamber. The door was a little ajar, and they saw Mr. Nevins within, standing at the bureau, apparently searching for something in one of the drawers. He hastily shut it as they entered, and turned toward them, his flushed face wearing a look, half defiant, half frightened. With a hasty speech he left the room, seemingly anxious to avoid them.

Approaching the bed, Arthur drew down the sheet and discovered the face of his dead mother, peaceful and smiling in the first untroubled sleep she had known for years. A sense of painful desolation fell upon Aldeane's heart, as she gazed upon the white, upturned face, whose look was changeless at her presence. It seemed as if an unrelenting hand was snapping her very heart-strings as she pressed her lips to those, so unresponsive to the tenderness. She turned weeping away, and encountered the gaze of those who had returned to their lonely watch beside the corpse. Her grief to them was sacred, and with half audible salutations they stood aside to let the mourners pass.

Aldeane was very tired, grief and fatigue had severely tried her frame, and not wishing to return to the sitting-room she turned aside to her own room, and entering, found a fire burning brightly upon the hearth she only remembered as dark and cheerless. A servant was busily engaged in arranging the room for her reception. She looked at Aldeane with some curiosity as she entered, and after a stare, prolonged to such a length that its object became quite uneasy, said :

“May be you’re her daughter?” pointing in the direction of the room in which Mrs. Nevins lay.

Aldeane articulated a faint “Yes.”

“Ah! I thought so,” continued the woman loquaciously. “You look some like her, and ’twill be a blessing for you if you’re half as good. She was a powerful nice woman, to be sure. I’ve heard her speak of you often, and of her son, too. She was ’mazin’ proud of him. Dear! dear! it’s a good mother you’ve lost—laws a me, it does seem dreadful that she’s dead and gone. But I didn’t mean to make you cry, miss. Now, do cheer up! We must all come to it sooner or later, and we all know she was ready for it. Can’t I do any thing more for you?” she queried, looking around the warm, cosy room with an air of pride.

“Yes,” replied Aldeane, “you may send my brother to me. Ask him to come up to my room, and to bring with him some paper, pens, and ink, and then, as you have got every thing so nice, I shall not need you any more to-night.”

“Very well, ma’am,” said the really kind-hearted girl. “As you don’t want me any more I’ll go ’long down and see how the widderer is a comin’ along. Nice man he is, to be sure! Mighty sorry she’s dead, I reckon. He hasn’t wanted her dead ever since I’ve known ’em! Oh! no, of course not!” and she smiled ironically as she left the room, leaving all the bitter feelings that had been

composing themselves to rest, battling in Aldeane's heart with renewed vigor at these significant words.

Arthur soon appeared, bringing with him the articles she had mentioned, asking for what purpose they were destined.

"To write to Belle, of course," answered Aldeane, drawing her chair near the table, and absently examining the paper. "I am nearly worn out, already! Mother's death was such a dreadful shock to me. It seems but yesterday that I saw her well and happy. Belle remarked to me, then, how well she looked. Oh! I wish she was here now!"

"I wish she was," replied Arthur. "But it is not much use for you to write to her to come. I do not think she could reach here until the day after the funeral—that takes place to-morrow, you know. I wished it delayed a day longer, but Mr. Nevins would not listen to such a proposal."

"I presume he desires us to leave the house as quickly as possible," returned Aldeane, bitterly. "I shall go to Rose Cottage before I return to school, so I will write to Belle and tell her of our affliction, for, indeed, I must unburden my heart to some one, and she, I know, will sympathize with me. There is a load of sorrow in my heart which it seems as if I shall always carry with me, her commiseration may lighten it," and she began to write. Arthur sat meditating in silence until the cessation of the rapid scratching of the pen denoted that the letter was finished. He read the offered epistle; then, while she sealed and directed it; fell again into a fit of musing, which lasted until a deep-drawn sigh from Aldeane aroused him.

"Aldeane," he at length observed, "I have been thinking of mother's last words, and I can not but think it providential that they were not heard by Nevins, for I think that paper is some disclosure concerning him."

"Some disclosure, Arthur," said Aldeane, wonderingly.

"Yes," he returned, "I have been thinking of him much of late, and I have a thousand suspicions of him—all unjust, perhaps, but very real. You do not believe in natural antipathies, I believe," he asked, turning toward her suddenly.

"No, I do not think I do," she answered, hesitatingly.

"But I can assure you, Aldeane," continued Arthur, earnestly, "that a natural antipathy exists between that man and me, and the only barrier that stood between our hatreds is gone. I am passive still, I can not but be passive, but he will work—he is working even now. I feel it. I know it. I am awaiting his attack. My mother knew it would come. That paper in Lawyer Evans's hands is to prepare me for it."

"You are excited and nervous, to-night," said Aldeane, soothingly. "The events of the day have been too much for you, dear brother. I can not think that Mr. Nevins will injure us, for in injuring you he injures me. We will never be divided, brother."

"Thank you for that promise, my darling," he said, kissing her fondly. "I will remember that, whatever happens." And years afterward he did remember it; years afterward when she, perhaps, had forgotten that she had ever uttered it.

He left her then, taking her letter with him, promising to send it by a man who would pass Rose Cottage the next day.

After a sleepless night Aldeane descended to the sitting-room, where she exchanged formal good-mornings with Mr. Nevins, after which he questioned her in an interested manner concerning her school, her position, and many minor details, all of which greatly surprised Aldeane. Naturally frank and unsuspecting herself, she always believed others possessed of the same qualities,

but as she looked upon the man before her it was impossible for her to divest herself of the conviction that his kindness was all assumed to serve some vile purpose.

He at length asked her how she would like to exchange school-teaching for housekeeping, hinting very plainly that he considered it her duty to take her mother's place in the household.

Aldeane would also have thought so, had he ever treated her with the interest and affection due her as her mother's child. But as he had, on the contrary, treated both Arthur and herself, heretofore, with the most bitter contempt and dislike, she felt under no obligations to take the place of a housekeeper under his control. So she replied that "she must, of course, finish out her year at school, and besides that, she was perfectly ignorant of household details, and that she would be of no use at home."

Mr. Nevins did not seem at all baffled or discouraged, and returned, that as for that matter, she would soon learn all that was necessary, and he would supply her with good servants—that she ought to practice domestic economy, for he supposed some fine city beau had got her promise already, and if not, that there were plenty in the country that would be glad enough to get her.

The light bantering tone in which he spoke, as well as the speech itself, sounded exceedingly heartless and indelicate to Aldeane. A slight sneer curled her lip, which perceiving, Mr. Nevins endeavored to dispel by suddenly drawing out his purse in a most unaccountable and unprecedented fit of liberality, and asking her how much she would require to obtain mourning garments.

Aldeane's heart swelled with a feeling of scorn at this pitiful bribery, and with indignation and shame that she should be its object. She replied proudly, that she had plenty of money for the purpose, as her salary had been lately paid her.

Mr. Nevins replaced his purse, with a look of gratification, and as Arthur entered sat down to the breakfast-table scarcely heeding his salutation. The meal was passed in silence, and soon after it was ended, the host left them, seeming ill at ease in Arthur's presence; they could not but notice this, and with feelings of deep distrust noted it down as evidence, that he contemplated some mischief against Arthur, which would of course also involve Aldeane. Its exact nature they taxed their minds to the utmost limits of conjecture to ascertain, but could in no degree determine. Arthur's visit to the lawyer had been made to no purpose. He was dangerously ill, and at such a time when his death was momentarily expected, his son could not be consulted upon any business matter, however urgent. So, unwillingly, Arthur was obliged to postpone the inquiries and investigations he had determined to make. He was assured of the hearty assistance of his old friend Charles Evans, and was content to let the matter rest for a short period.

Mourning garments, by Arthur's orders, had been prepared at the village for Aldeane. With a sad, and heavy heart she appeared in them at her mother's burial, and bent over the yawning grave in which was soon inclosed that one who through life had so fondly cherished her. Ah, Aldeane, well might you bewail that tender mother. With her, was home, and peace, and love all buried.

There was left the walls of strangers, and their shelter and kindness, nothing more, sad heart, nothing, nothing more.

And what for Arthur? Scarcely these in such full measure as came to Aldeane, but full measure to overflowing of the world's enmity and hatred, and he knew that the hand to mete it out to him would be that of his step-father, Jonas Nevins.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT ARTHUR'S CAUTION AVAILED.

THE morning after the funeral, Mr. Nevins informed Arthur that he desired an interview of five minutes with him, and that he should advise, but not insist, that Aldeane should be absent.

Never perhaps were two men more directly contrasted than the two she left together at the breakfast-table, rising after pouring the coffee and excusing herself upon the plea of a violent headache, which was indeed more real than such excuses generally are. Jonas Nevins had of late rapidly grown old, with such age, as deep and anxious care, and doubtfully held prosperity often brings. He looked nervously at the young man opposite him as if measuring his strength both of body and mind.

"You are a handsome fellow," he said at length. "Your mother did well to be proud of her only child."

"Her only child!" exclaimed Arthur. "Is Aldeane then not my sister?"

"What a sharp lawyer this man will make," cried Nevins in affected admiration, "to have had his father's will before his eyes all these years and never to have suspected that!"

Arthur looked at him in dumb amazement which had not long in it any element of unbelief, for suddenly a hundred things which had puzzled him were explained. But if Aldeane was not his sister, who was she?

This was the first question he found breath to ask, and

Mr. Nevins, who had been watching him narrowly as if to learn whether the information he volunteered was indeed new, answered him readily, "The exact relationship existing between you and the young lady I can not explain. However I believe there is some relationship."

"Do you mean to say, sir, that my mother never explained it to you?" asked Arthur doubtfully, thinking to himself that doubtless the paper she had left with the lawyer would do so fully to him.

"You know your mother was not inclined to trust me voluntarily with any secret," answered Nevins, shrugging his shoulders, and taking a position with his back to the fire, whence he looked at Arthur, who toyed with his cup and spoon thoughtfully. "Of course," he continued with a smile of triumph, "she could not long deceive me as to Aldeane's real position."

"I can not imagine how I have been blind so long," mused Arthur, and then he hurriedly said something of the necessity of keeping this from her.

"Why as to that," said Mr. Nevins very coolly, "I was about to recommend to you, that she be told immediately, that she may at once recognize the fact that she has no claim upon you."

"You mistake, sir," answered Arthur lifting his head and looking at him proudly. "Aldeane has every claim upon me. I consider her a sacred trust left to me by my dead mother."

"Estimable woman!" said Mr. Nevins, with a little sigh and another shrug of his shoulders. "Very estimable woman, but mistaken on some points. For instance, I think she should have explained Aldeane's position to you."

Arthur coincided in this opinion more closely than he could remember having ever done with any expressed by Mr. Nevins before, but he said nothing, and his step-father continued: "I hope, at least, young man, that she informed you perfectly of yours."

Arthur glanced at him keenly. "I think I can hardly be mistaken as to that," he said.

Mr. Nevins nodded gravely, and drew from his pocket a well-filled wallet. "Of course," he said, as he opened it, "you are prepared to acknowledge these claims I hold against you?" and he placed before the astonished young man a series of papers which he recognized as the quarterly school-bills of himself and Aldeane.

"These bills are doubtless genuine," he said at length, in as calm a voice as he could assume, "but I can not see why they are placed before me to-day."

"For settlement, sir, for settlement," said Mr. Nevins grandly. "These bills, sir, you doubtless know, will be handed you for settlement from your estate."

Arthur Guthrie rose from his seat, his eyes absolutely blazing with passion. "I deny the validity of your claims, sir," he exclaimed, "and I denounce you as a villain."

Nevins shrugged his shoulders and smiled in the coolest manner. "I told your mother you would do that," he said.

"My mother was never a party to this shameful deception," exclaimed Arthur. "Do you, sir, ignore a conversation which took place between us upon this subject three summers ago?"

"I remember," he replied, "that about that time I was obliged, by my promise to your mother, to aid in a very pardonable deception which she practiced upon you."

"What do you mean?" asked Arthur.

"Simply that your mother well knew that I intended to carry out your father's will merely to the extent of a fair division of the interest of the actual property left by him would allow. That share would, perhaps, find you in clothes; but I am not quite sure of it, as I observe you like to dress well."

Arthur made no reply, but looked at him from head to

foot; but so far from appearing uneasy under the scrutiny, he continued: "I don't deny but that I have done well by your father's property, but that is no reason why I should waste the proceeds of my labor upon you, nor do I intend to do so."

Arthur Guthrie was silent for full fifteen minutes, during which time Mr. Nevins carelessly hummed a tune and pared his finger-nails, observing his victim, however, with a glance that never faltered.

"I told you, three years ago, that I would never by law enforce my father's will," said Arthur, at last, "and in what you have to-day told me of Aldeane, the truth of which I can not doubt, I have an additional reason for not doing so. What is the total amount of these bills?"

"Something near seven thousand dollars, I believe."

"Interest and all?"

"Interest, of course."

Again Arthur was for a long time silent. His first impulse was to offer no terms to this man until after he had seen the paper left with Mr. Evans, and had consulted Mr. Ashton, but fearing that in case of this delay Nevins might inform Aldeane of the false position which she had so long held, and which he resolved should never become known to her until the whole mystery could be explained, he at length said:

"Upon one condition, and one alone, Mr. Nevins, I will pay your unjust demand, and that is, that henceforth you maintain entire silence regarding Aldeane, and never breathe to any soul, most especially to herself, one word of what you have to-day told me."

"Why, really, the matter is nothing to me," said Nevins, readily adding, with a grim sort of enjoyment, "It will take all your little fortune, eh?"

To this Arthur deigned no reply, but said: "You will understand, sir, that you have given me a promise to-day, or, rather, that I have purchased it with a bribe."

Nevins colored to the temples. "At least," he said, after a pause, "if there is silence upon my part there must be on yours."

Arthur nodded contemptuously. "You may be sure I shall be silent until you speak. I shall be too careful of Aldeane's peace for that."

"By the way, I have something more to say of Aldeane," said Nevins, thoughtfully.

Arthur looked at him, but he did not seem able to speak as readily as he wished. "I wish," he said at last, abruptly and plainly enough, "to adopt Aldeane."

Arthur looked at him in intense astonishment. "To that I will never consent," he exclaimed.

"I do not see that your consent would be of much importance," retorted Nevins. "I shall make the proposition to Aldeane, and it is for her to refuse or accept, as she pleases. I shall, of course, represent to her that the greater part of your debt to me has been incurred by her, and that by becoming my daughter, and utterly renouncing you, she will free you from the necessity of paying her share of it."

"You may spare yourself the trouble of making such a proposition to Aldeane," said Arthur firmly. "She shall never accept it."

"I shall spare no trouble to insure her welfare," answered Nevins. "I have a peculiar affection for her, and it is for that reason I assented so readily to your proposition; I am as anxious as you are that her peace of mind shall not be disturbed. I am also anxious to place her in the position for which she was designed by birth."

"You know, then, who and what she is?" cried Arthur quickly.

"Of that I shall say nothing, but whatever might be her birth, I offer to place her now in an enviable position—to make her my heiress."

"I decline the honor for her," said Arthur.

"You are premature," answered Nevins, frowning. "I will myself speak to Aldeane this afternoon."

"Aldeane will be true to herself and to me," answered Arthur proudly.

"It is a matter of perfect indifference to me," mused Nevins, as Arthur withdrew. "I have at least by this offer established the name of a model step-father, and should she accept she will be mightily useful as the mistress of my town establishment; and if I should die, as I suppose all men must—though it is a decidedly unpleasant arrangement—why there would be a sort of poetical justice in leaving my money to her."

But there seemed no probability that he would ever be called upon to do that, for Aldeane Guthrie, after having been informed by Arthur of the course Nevins had taken, could not for a moment think of assuming toward him the relationship he proposed.

"My dear brother," she sobbed, "I know I am selfish in impoverishing you so, but I can better do that than dishonor you by taking that man's name, and accepting his bounty."

"Far better, my darling, far better," he answered, with a fond embrace. "Follow my fortunes, dearest. Poor as they may be, they will at least be those of an honorable man."

And something of this, in her just indignation, she told Mr. Nevins that afternoon, to which he coolly replied, that he had done his duty, and that she might pursue the course she had chosen without hinderance from him.

And the next morning before its owner arose, Arthur and Aldeane Guthrie, left the farm-house forever, and hastened from its coldness and gloom to the warmth and light of Rose Cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

ALDEANE TAKES A JOURNEY, AND FINDS A HOME.

FOUR months later Arthur Guthrie was an almost penniless student in a law office in Boston, his step-father was in undisputed possession of the greater portion of his property, and Aldeane was spending the vacation at Rose Cottage.

She had just entered with Miss Ashton from a call at Mrs. Morgan's, and was sitting upon the piazza discussing the manners and appearance of her niece, Miss Annie Greyson.

"She is certainly very beautiful," said Aldeane.

"Yes," returned her friend, "as Fred once said, she is like a lovely doll, and my opinion is, she has also about as much heart and brain as a doll."

"Why, I am sure," said Aldeane reproachfully, "she seems to like every one."

"Certainly, she does," she returned, with a merry laugh; "she has not animation enough to support a prejudice."

"I wonder Mr. Morgan did not return home when his father died," said Aldeane, bending low over some trifle in her hand.

"I wondered at it too," answered Belle, "but it appears that Mr. Morgan expressed a wish that his son should complete his tour. I am sure poor Fred can have but little heart for it. I wish he would come home. I shall be so lonely, when you are gone."

Aldeane pressed the hand of her friend. "My dear love," said she, "what will be your loneliness to mine?"

"And yet you are glad to go," said Belle.

"Almost," she answered, "or, at least, I am glad that Professor Grenville considered me worthy of the situation."

"What did he say the lady's name was?" asked Belle.

"Arendell, Mrs. John Arendell. She was once a pupil of his."

"The name seems quite familiar to me," said Belle, "but of course I can not know her. I am surprised that Arthur has consented to allow you to go so far from him."

Aldeane smiled. "It really is not such a long distance, Belle, and as North Carolina is our native State, it is natural we should have some inclination for it. Dear Arthur! I hope you will be very kind to him, Belle, when I am gone."

Belle reddened and smiled. "I can hardly fail to be that," she replied, "every one likes him but that horrible Nevins. Do you know, Aldeane, Charley Evans told papa that he believes Nevins bribed that clerk he discharged soon after his father's death, yes, actually bribed him, to give him that paper your mother left with him, for not a trace of it could be found. I never saw papa in such a way about any thing."

"Hush," said Aldeane warningly, "it is indeed a very strange thing, but we ought not to talk of it. Unfortunately Mr. Evans was a very eccentric man, and used to find the strangest hiding-places for most valuable papers."

"Yes," interrupted Belle, "Charley used to tell Arthur when he was at college, that the business never would be straightened if he died of apoplexy, as there was every indication he would. But how provoking to think

the old gentleman's seeretive propensities should so nearly affect you."

"Or at least, Arthur," said Aldeane. "Poor fellow! it has grieved me so to be such a drawback to him. It seems so unnatural for him to be poor."

"Yes," said a voice behind them, "he has a most gentlemanly aptitude for disposing of riches."

But Aldeane, as she turned toward the speaker, knew that he thought none the worse of her brother for that, and his daughter laughingly reproved him for uttering what she termed such heresy, and called upon him once more, for the hundredth time, to oppose Aldeane's intention of going South as a governess. But he very gravely objected to doing any thing of the sort, but highly commended her resolve, seeming indeed to have some higher reason for doing so than the thought of the excellent salary and light duties that had tempted her.

And three weeks later, Aldeane Guthrie was in a new sphere of action, actively entering upon her new duties without many regrets, for the love and friends she had left behind, with strong hopes for the future, and no weak fears.

With the greatest anxiety, Belle thought of her friend, who had gone to brave the world alone; and among strangers. Days seemed to pass like long dreary weeks as she impatiently awaited a letter from her. It came at last, and with a joyful and beating heart, she broke the seal, and eagerly devoted herself to the perusal of the many and closely written pages. As they contained a full account of her new home and its inhabitants, we will present them to the reader:

LORING, N. C., *August* —, 18—.

MY DEAR BELLE:

As I promised to do, when I left you, I am writing at my earliest opportunity. I arrived here three days ago.

My adventures on the journey are too numerous and trite to mention. So I will pass them by. I found myself, after a long jolting ride, in a miserable stage-coach, over the roughest of roads, at Loring. It was about eight o'clock in the evening, but the heat which had nearly suffocated me throughout the day, did not seem in the slightest degree diminished. I had expected to find quite a large town, as Loring is the county seat. It is in fact nothing but a small village, and an ancient and gloomy-looking place—at least as I viewed it by the brilliant light of the summer moon. I was about to inquire for the residence of Mr. Arendell, when a negro man approached, and asked if I was “Miss Guthrie.” I replied that I was. He then said “Mass John had sent him for me, and would have come himself, if he had been at home.” Not exactly knowing who Mass John might be, I asked him whether he meant Mr. Arendell. “I mean de Colonel, ma’am, dere ain’t no Mr. Arendell now.” I laughed at the earnestness with which he spoke, and was a little surprised at the searching glance with which he regarded me. I pointed out my luggage to him. It was soon placed at the back of the carriage, in which I had seated myself, and we drove rapidly out of the town. I asked Uncle Adam, for that proved to be the driver’s name, how far we had to go. “’Bout two miles, miss,” was his reply. I was very glad to know that I was not to live in the little dingy place we had left. After driving through thick woods for some distance, we ascended a gentle elevation and were in sight of Arendell House. It is a large white mansion, with piazzas on every side, almost covered with climbing roses and flowering vines. The long windows, shaded by Venetian blinds, reached to the ground, and as we approached I saw a gentleman, with a long reed pipe in his hand, step out of one of them, and join a lady who was standing upon the piazza. A moment afterward, the carriage stopped at the gate. The gentleman was there, and

assisted me to alight. He introduced himself as Colonel Arendell. He is about fifty years old, tall and thin, like most of the natives of the South. His hair is thin and gray; his complexion sallow, and his whole appearance somewhat meager. He has a careless and happy expression of countenance, and his good-humored smile, as well as the words with which he greeted me, prepared me for a sincere welcome from the other members of the family. As he welcomed me, I for the first time thought of my travel-soiled appearance; but it was too late to remedy it now; so in some confusion I followed him to the house, and was introduced to Mrs. Arendell. She is a fine, handsome woman. I have somewhere seen a face much resembling hers, but I can not remember where. She is much younger than her husband, and far more elegant. I saw at a glance that she was a Northerner, and immediately felt as if I had found an old friend. Her manners are so winning and charming that I soon became perfectly at ease in her company. She conducted me to the supper table, which was most temptingly spread; on returning to the parlor, a young lady about fifteen years old, arose to meet me.

"My step-daughter, Leonore," said Mrs. Arendell.

I wish I could place Leonore Arendell before you in all her beauty; my description can never convey to you the indescribable charm and grace that surrounds her. She is small, and delicately formed; her complexion is as fair as a pure white lily, with a tint of rose overspreading it like a halo rather than a definite color. Her coral lips, when parted disclosed small even teeth of pearl-like whiteness; dark glossy ringlets ripple over her brow, and fall over her shoulders, in a graceful shower. But this beauty of person, is nothing in comparison with the loveliness of soul that beams through her speaking eyes. Tenderness of heart, with no traces of a strong mind, are visible in every action.

She seemed very glad to see me, and spoke frequently of the pleasure she anticipated in again pursuing her favorite study, music. I asked her how long it was since she had left school. She replied: "Only three months. I am so glad to be at home, though pa says that I know nothing, Miss Guthrie. I don't like Raleigh at all, and I am not going back again. I am sure you can teach me all I want to know."

I retired early to rest, and greatly fatigued with my journey slept well until morning. I suppose you are anxious to know how I am situated. My room is very large and pleasant, handsomely furnished, and its windows command a fine view of the surrounding country.

I stood for some time at the window, watching the sun as it arose slowly above the belt of pines that bounded the horizon—then tempted by the cool morning air, and the dewy fragrance of the garden at my feet, I descended and entered it. It was a perfect thicket of roses. Roses cover the arbors and border the walks, sending up a cloud of perfume, and producing a scene of luxuriant beauty almost indescribable.

I walked down the graveled path to the gate; then turned to look at the house. It arose white and stately from almost a forest of trees—mimosas, oaks, maples, and cedars, the latter in such numbers that they totally dispelled the idea of lightness and cheerfulness with which we usually conceive Southern houses to be surrounded. A wide piazza encircled the house; a variety of creeping plants entwined the lattice before them; the sweet-scented honeysuckle still was blooming; but Spring had borne away with her all other blossoms. The long green Venetian blinds were thrown back; and I caught sight of a room handsomely furnished, with Brussels carpet, rich brocade, and lace curtains, velvet chairs and sofas, and a superb piano. Another apartment also opened upon the piazza. It was the sitting-room; look-

ing delightfully cool, its floor covered with matting, the windows hung with green brocade and lace, a number of white cane-chairs were scattered over the room. I presently saw one pushed through the window, and was followed by Colonel Arendell, smoking, with an appearance of the most intense enjoyment, a very long reed pipe. (I have discovered that this pipe is his constant companion and solace.) Not wishing to be seen, I turned into a side path, bordered by high rose-bushes, and gained a little ascent, from which I could see, at the back of the house, a river flowing. Belle, you know that we have often read of the silvery waters of the South. I fain would support this illusion, but candor compels me to own that this stream is narrow and turbid; the wide, sand-washed banks, indicate that it does not always flow on in the same narrow channel, but occasionally bursts forth, flooding the surrounding country with its angry waters. I observed that at a short distance stood an immense and wide-spreading oak; indeed, so tall is it, that even in this region of forests, it marks the place for miles around. I soon stood beneath its shadow. It crowns a slight eminence, from whence I could see the dwelling-house, the long row of negro cabins behind it, and catch glimpses of the sullen river beyond them all. It was a beautiful scene. The green cornfields on the opposite side of the river, which is spanned at this point by a slight wooden bridge, waved luxuriantly in the morning light; the laborers had early begun their toil, and with monotonous, yet cheerful songs, were performing their tasks; from the kitchen to the house, women were hurrying to and fro in their bright homespun dresses; their black faces rendered even darker by contrast with their many-colored turbans. I was lost in contemplation of the scene, and conjecturing the many tales this same old oak could tell me of the events that had taken place beneath its shadow if the voice of fabled time could be

given to it, when I was aroused by a child's voice angrily exclaiming :—

“I will ride! I'll tell my mamma of you! so I will!”

I looked up the path, and saw a little girl running rapidly and passionately in the direction in which I stood, occasionally stopping to stamp her feet, and repeat the words that had first arrested my attention. She was about four years old, and a true type of Southern beauty, a perfect brunette with dark fiery eyes, and a wild, mirthful expression. Her jetty curls, were thrown back from her dark face and crimson cheeks. She was dressed in a short blue frock, that was blown back by the morning breeze as she continued unwittingly and hastily to approach me. A negro woman appeared at the head of the walk, calling loudly, “Oh-h! Miss Jessie! Oh-h! Miss Jessie! don't tell your mar, and I'll give you a ride!”

I still stood beneath the great oak, and when the child came near to me, I stepped forward to meet her, with a cheerful smile, saying, “What is the matter? Who is it that won't let you ride?”

She stopped suddenly, much astonished at my presence; looked up and down the path, as if uncertain which way to run; then glanced at me bashfully, in childish confusion, twirling her fingers in her long curls.

I repeated my questions; and with tears starting to her fine eyes; she replied, “Zettie won't let me ride; and ma said I might. Frank and Eddie have had a right smart ride; and I want one too.” And she puckered up her face to keep back the rising tears.

“Well! never mind, dear,” I answered, “we will go back, and see what can be done. Tell me your name, will you?”

“My name is Jessie Louisa Arendell. What is yours?” was her prompt reply, accompanying the question with a close scrutiny of my person. “You're the lady that's going to teach us, ain't you?” she presently continued.

"Yes," I replied, unable wholly to repress a smile, "and my name is Guthrie."

"Haven't you any other name than that?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, I am called Aldeane Guthrie."

"Well, now, that's a mighty pretty name; prettier than you are yourself!"

I was about to indulge in a laugh at her oddity, which I could no longer restrain, when she exclaimed: "There are Frank and Eddy! Now, Miss Guthrie, can't I have a ride?"

I looked up, and saw just before me two pretty boys, the eldest about ten years old, the other about two years younger. The largest was dismounting a small gray pony, which was held by a negro woman, who was evidently indulging in a fit of sulks. The boys looked at me curiously, and replied, "How d'ye?" to my salutation.

Turning to the woman, whom Jessie had called Zettie, I said: "Does Mrs. Arendell permit Miss Jessie to ride?"

"Yes, ma'rm," was her muttered response.

"Zettie's mad to-day, and won't let her," said one of the boys. "Ma will scold her well, when she knows it, too."

"Oh, Miss Guthrie, can't I ride!" cried Jessie, again.

"Certainly you may," I replied, and lifted her into the saddle. She kissed me joyously, and the sulky servant led the pony briskly away. I now made some progress toward an acquaintance with the boys, and found them polite and intelligent. Jessie soon returned, vociferously proclaiming that she had had "a mighty nice ride!" The breakfast-bell sounded, and we turned toward the house, Jessie dancing along beside me, asking innumerable questions, and the boys following us very quietly and bashfully. As we approached the house, I saw Colo-

nel and Mrs. Arendell upon the piazza; they seemed surprised that I had arisen so early, and much pleased that I had already gained the good-will of the children.

After breakfast, Colonel Arendell sauntered, pipe in hand, out to the fields. "You see I have to work, Miss Guthrie," he said, laughing. "My wife will not tolerate an overseer, and, in fact, they are a troublesome set of fellows. I have no cause to love them."

Mrs. Arendell and I repaired to the sitting-room, while Leonore with a large bunch of keys, and followed by a half-dozen negro women, went to the smoke-house and store-room, to give out supplies. "You see I am bringing up Leonore quite a Southern housekeeper," said Mrs. Arendell, "though every one says she has imbibed many of my Northern proclivities."

The day passed very pleasantly. Several ladies called, and appeared very pleasant and sociable. The children are quite intelligent and good-natured, so I presume the task of instructing them will not be very arduous. I believe that I shall find life in North Carolina more pleasant than you predicted, though I will not promise not to get homesick and return to you.

This evening, as I was standing on the back piazza, forming a wreath from the sprays of multifloras that creep over it, I saw Jessie apparently working earnestly at the well, with a dipper in hand, endeavoring to obtain water from the bucket. She did so several times, and threw it on the ground, at the same time drenching herself plentifully. So intent was she upon her work that she did not observe me until I exclaimed:—

"Jessie, what are you doing?"

"Giving my frogs water, to be sure," she replied, continuing her exertions.

"What do you mean?" I inquired, approaching her.

"The frogs are all thirsty of evenings," she replied, "and they come to the well to drink, and there isn't any

water 'round, you know, so I always give 'em some. Here, little froggy, here!"

I was exceedingly amused, and answered, "Why don't you get Zettie, or Aunt Roxy to give them water? See, you are splashing yourself all over!"

"Oh! they all laugh at me, and say the frogs can go to the river. But they don't like such dirty water; besides, they don't know the way there; and 'twould be a heap more trouble to show 'em the way than to give 'em water myself."

"It would, indeed," I replied, laughing. "But come! they have plenty of water now." She hung up the dipper, smoothed down her wet "coat," as she called her dress, slipped her little hand into mine, and went with me to the house. *Ma chère*, do you not think I have an oddity for a pupil? Yet, I assure you, I am charmed with her, as with every other person and thing here.

And now I must stop; not because I have nothing more to say, or because I will pretend to fear that you will be weary of this letter, which already exceeds all reasonable length, but because I have still to write to dear Arthur, of whom I expect a full account when you write.

With dearest love to him, your papa, and yourself,

I remain ever

Your affectionate

ALDEANE.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SLIGHT MYSTERY.

THE first Sunday after Aldeane arrived at Arendell House—as her new residence was familiarly called—she accompanied the family to a camp-meeting which was held in a grove some miles distant. Here, in the scene of confusion incident to the occasion, was shown to her the class of people among which she was thrown. The highest and lowest grades of society—the aristocrats and the slaves—with the only intermediate one, the poor whites—were amply represented; and she learned, in three hours, more of their characteristics than she could have hoped, in ordinary intercourse, to do in as many months.

Upon the whole, she was pleased, although she was somewhat shocked at witnessing so boisterous and exciting a scene where the people were gathered together for religious exercises; but when she discovered that the laughing and shouting and crying was so far from irreverence that they were considered an important part of those exercises, she could look upon them with some degree of toleration, and find a curious admiration for the excessive fervor, that had to her such unseemly time and place of expression.

Upon the conclusion of the services, Aldeane was introduced to a number of people who exchanged greetings with the Arendells, and awakened so much interest and attention, especially from the young gentlemen, that she

was quite relieved to hear Mrs. Arendell say, in answer to a question from some one near:—

“No, we shall not stay for the next services; we have so far to go, you know. Good-bye! Colonel Arendell, please take Miss Guthrie and Jessie in your carriage, the rest of the children will return with me.”

He bowed, and assisted Aldeane into the carriage; then lifted in Jessie, who declared that she was “tired to death,” and finally sprang in himself, and they soon left the ground, proceeding for some time in silence. Jessie had fallen asleep, and Aldeane was absorbed in thoughts of the scene she had just witnessed, when she was aroused by the remark of Colonel Arendell:—

“That must be a strange scene to one who has never been in North Carolina or the South before.”

“Or even to me that has, sir,” she answered. “I was born in this State, but remember nothing of it.”

“Indeed!” he exclaimed, seeming to be much surprised, while the color rushed to his face. “In what county?”

She mentioned it.

“Ah! yes, *she* lived there!” he muttered. Then asked, “When did you leave this State?”

“When I was about a year old.”

“And your mother’s name, before marriage, was—”

“Ellen Deane, sir.”

“Yes, yes. Have you any brothers?”

“One. Arthur.”

“Will you favor me by letting me know your given name?”

“Certainly! It is Aldeane.”

“Al—deane!” he reiterated, rising from his seat in the carriage, as if in the greatest alarm and astonishment. “Al—deane! Whom were you called after? It is a strange name.”

Aldeane was half frightened at his vehemence. She

saw that he had heard the name before, but replied as calmly as possible.

"I once asked my mother the same question that you have put to me, sir, and she said, 'After my sister Alice, who before her marriage was almost always called Al Deane, to distinguish her from a cousin of the same name.' I was about to ask more concerning my aunt when my mother left the room, as if wishing to shun further inquiry, and after that I never had an opportunity of making any."

"Then it is your mother's death you mourn!" he said, glancing at her black dress, with, Aldeane thought, a relieved expression.

"Yes, sir."

For the time he remained silent, apparently absorbed in painful thought. Aldeane looked at him with wonder, and curiosity; his conduct was to her inexplicable. At last she inquired:

"Did you know this Alice Deane, sir?"

He started as if the name had been an adder, and had stung him, and looking at her with an expression she could never forget, said:—

"Why do you ask? Let the dead past bury its dead!"

"So Alice Deane is dead!" continued Aldeane, unheeding his question, or the remark that had followed it, for she felt positive that he had once known her.

"Yes," he returned looking at her as if fascinated. "Yes, yes, she is dead! She died young. She was scarcely your age, young lady."

She was about to ask more concerning her aunt when the carriage stopped before the gate of Arendell House. Colonel Arendell silently assisted Aldeane to alight, placed the still sleeping Jessie in her arms, and turned into a narrow and shaded path, as if anxious to be alone.

Aldeane was greatly perplexed by his conduct. The

only solution of the mystery that she could frame was, that he had once loved Alice Deane, and that some tragical event had caused her death. Yet even this was scarcely sufficient to explain his violent agitation, and Mrs. Nevins' evident distress at the mention of her name.

Aldeane decided to question Colonel Arendell upon the subject as soon, and as closely, as possible. The autumn, and winter passed, and spring had cast her vernal offerings over earth, before Aldeane found an opportunity to make further inquiries of him concerning her relative. He avoided any allusion to the subject, and much to her dissatisfaction she still remained in the same state of mystery and uncertainty into which his first conversation had thrown her.

It was on the afternoon of a day in early April that she found herself alone with him, and thought of the subject that had so long perplexed her, and as he was in a genial, talkative mood, she hoped to elicit some true and interesting information from him, so she turned toward him with the inquiry:—

“Colonel Arendell, will you not tell me something about my aunt Alice?”

He looked up quickly with an expression of pain and alarm. “Why do you ask, child? Let the dead rest,” he said bitterly.

For a moment Aldeane was silent. “I ask,” she said at length, “because a mystery has always enshrouded her. Colonel Arendell, did you know her well?”

His face was pale, and his hand trembled, as he removed his pipe from his mouth, and emitted a cloud of smoke. He watched it as it curled gracefully upward, and said slowly: “Yes, I knew her. The family were in moderate circumstances, and she was much admired for her beauty. I have sometimes thought your expression is like hers, otherwise you more closely resemble your father.”

"Oh, sir! you must have forgotten him," returned Aldeane. "I have heard that Arthur is a perfect likeness of him, and he is very dark and handsome—a perfect contrast to me. You must forget!"

"Well, perhaps I do," he answered testily.

Aldeane, in no degree discouraged, continued: "Was Aunt Alice ever married? Did she die regretted?"

Colonel Arendell was again watching the progress of the smoke as it rose from his lips, and Aldeane awaiting a reply, when a shadow darkened the window, and glancing up Aldeane caught a glimpse of the figure of a gentleman who was no unfrequent visitor, although evidently no very welcome one.

Before she could leave the room, as she had every desire to do, for she had an instinctive and unconquerable dislike of him, he was standing at the door, bowing and smiling most graciously.

This man was not unhandsome or ungainly, yet he carried himself as if he possessed a painful consciousness of being both. This perhaps it was in conjunction with his exceeding fondness of flashy dress and ornament, that proved at once that he was not a gentleman, though he claimed the name, and held the position of one.

Aldeane had more reasons than her eyes gave her for avoiding this man; for, although he was old enough to be her father, he had followed her with covert, yet most eager admiration, since their first meeting.

This day, however, it proved that she had no need to avoid him, for he had called but for a moment, he said, to have a word upon business with Colonel Arendell. This word he had, and then, with a bow to Aldeane, departed.

On his way out he met Leonore, who, with a cold "Good-morning," waited for him to pass by her, and then, lounging into the room in her usual idle way, inquired:—

"When is Cousin Richard going to redeem his promise, papa, and relieve us of the sight of his scowling face?"

Aldeane thought she should rather have said "sinister smiling face," but she said nothing, and awaited Colonel Arendell's reply, which was not uttered immediately, but with slow and grave reproof.

"You should not speak in that manner of your cousin, Nora. Where have you learned to do it?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and tossed her pretty head willfully. "I'm sure I don't know where I learned to dislike Cousin Richard, pa—what a hateful way we have here of calling even our most distant relatives cousins—but this I do know, that I do dislike him as thoroughly even as mamma does, and you know she never would let you rest, until he was off the plantation."

"Leonore," said her father, flushing slightly, "I shall be obliged to be angry with you if you say any thing more of Blake."

"Because you know I can say nothing good?" she questioned laughingly.

He looked at her with a frown, perhaps almost for the first time in his life. "Oh dear, papa, don't be angry with me," she cried, with an instant change from her mirthful, childish manner, to one of womanly grief and sorrow. "Indeed, papa, I'll never say any thing hateful of Cousin Richard again. But I'm sure I didn't know you liked him so."

"Like him?" he said, moodily; "who does like him? But he was your mother's cousin, Leonore, and for years my overseer; it hardly becomes us to speak ill of him."

"Oh, as to speaking ill of him," returned Leonore, with a little pout, "one would not wish to do that of one's own relations. But I'm sure, papa, when he was your overseer, there was more whipping done in a month, than in the whole ten years since."

"You have an excellent memory, Nora," said her father, and then turning to Aldeane, said, in an explanatory way: "Blake was in truth a hard master; I used to object in my own mind very much; but what is the use of keeping an overseer, if one looks to the work, or worries over the punishment? Of course, I let Blake have his own way, as every proprietor should. He had his own way—a pretty rough way, I am inclined to think now—until I brought Ida to my home. She immediately conceived a great dislike to him, and wished me to dismiss him. I, however, was under some trifling obligations to him, and could not do so immediately. He obligingly proposed, on a few conditions, to free me of his presence. A short time after leaving me, he commenced speculating in slaves, and I believe has done very well."

"What obligations were you under to him, papa?" inquired Leonore.

His face flushed darkly, as he replied: "One is always under obligations to those who serve him, my dear; you would not understand me, Leonore, if I should explain. It is merely business matters, nothing more."

Aldeane could not reconcile the words with the dark, almost remorseful expression, that remained upon his face during the remainder of the drive. The Arendells, as well as other families, undoubtedly possessed secrets, and Mr. Blake might be privy to them; she was merely, however, a dependent in the family, and, therefore, had no right to peer into any of its mysteries. She was indeed treated by all as a beloved friend and equal. Arendell House had become to her a pleasant home, though occasionally events would transpire to mar her calm enjoyments. Jessie was willful, Frank passionate, and Eddie dull and stubborn. They were all affectionate, and she liked them well, yet they very often annoyed and grieved her. Leonore was always gentle and tractable, and had made great progress in her studies. Altogether Aldeane's

position was a pleasant one. Frequent letters from Belle, and many friends in Boston, prevented homesickness. Colonel Arendell seemed to entertain a strong affection for her, and to Mrs. Arendell she had become a much valued friend. Thus, after a residence of eight months in the family, she had rendered herself valued and beloved by all.

CHAPTER IX.

GRASSMERE.

ONE beautiful morning in May, when the full luxuriance of spring had clothed the earth in beauty, and when Aldeane was reminded, with feelings akin to homesickness, of the only place where she ever had before truly enjoyed the beauties of nature, that paradise of her childhood, Rose Cottage, and wondered if there could be another spot so lovely. Colonel Arendell said suddenly, as they were seated at the breakfast-table, "It is your birthday to-morrow, is it not, Miss Guthrie?"

"Yes, sir," replied Aldeane, "but how did you discover it? I am sure I have told no one!"

"I must have learnt it from some one," returned the Colonel, a confused expression passing over his countenance, "for you see I know it. Let me see, you will be eighteen."

"Yes, sir," replied Aldeane, still more surprised, for she had supposed the family considered her older.

"Oh, I know how *pā* found it out," cried Frank; "you have a volume of poems, Miss Guthrie, with your name, and the date of your seventeenth birthday, written on the fly-leaf! It was given to you by Miss Ashton."

"Yes, oh yes! That must have been the way," returned Colonel Arendell, laughing; glad of the opportunity to equivocate. "But, Frank, you seem to have learned the lesson, as well as I did."

"Well!" said Frank, coloring, "'twas such pretty writing, and besides Miss Guthrie showed me Miss Ash-

ton's likeness; and she is the prettiest young lady I ever saw. Oh! she is a beauty!"

"Yes," chimed in Jessie, "she's a heap prettier than Miss Aldeane, for she's got curls and blue eyes."

"No comments, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Arendell, "Miss Guthrie may not like them. Her brown eyes are as pretty as Miss Ashton's blue, if you would only think so."

"No, they ain't; and Miss Guthrie's mouth is as big again as Miss Ashton's," returned Jessie, shaking her head willfully; "and she's mighty good too, for Miss Aldeane told me so, and I want to see her!"

"Well! my child," said the colonel, "I'm afraid your desire will not soon be gratified. But we were speaking of your birthday, Miss Guthrie; we must honor it. What do you say to a visit to Grassmere?"

Aldeane had often heard this place spoken of as an estate belonging to Colonel Arendell, some twelve miles distant; which was always represented as exceedingly beautiful and attractive. So, although she said nothing, she inwardly hoped the proposition would meet with favor. It seemed to, at least from Jessie, who exclaimed:—

"Oh, yes! let us go to Grassmere! The apples and plums are getting ripe there. Uncle Adam told me so!"

"What do you say to it, Ida?" queried Colonel Arendell. "I know you would like to go, Miss Guthrie?"

"Yes, indeed, sir!"

"Well, then, by all means let us go. It is a very pleasant place," said Mrs. Arendell.

"Hurrah, for Grassmere!" shouted Frank, dashing out of the room, to indulge more freely in his exclamations of joy and triumph: while Eddie secretly thought of the promised respite from books with the greatest delight.

All entered into the plan with enthusiasm. So it was decided that they would go.

The next morning at dawn, Jessie entered Aldeane's room, bringing a little book-mark, which under Leonore's tuition she had worked; her fingers were still sore from the pricks they had received.

Upon her descent to the piazza, the boys presented her with two beautiful bouquets, sparkling with dew. Frank vainly endeavored to press upon her acceptance his new riding-whip, while Eddie brought her the new "Reader" he had lately commenced, and assured her that he should be most happy to give it to her, if she would only keep it out of his sight. Leonore presented her with a set of jet jewelry, and Colonel and Mrs. Arendell with something still more valuable, in the form of a chain for her watch. Aldeane rejoiced at receiving these presents, not because of their intrinsic worth, but that they were assurances of the love and esteem of those she was most desirous to please.

At an early hour the carriage, and the ponies for Frank and Eddie, were at the gate. The boys were mounted long before the rest of the party were ready to start, and were prancing up and down the gravel walks laughing, shouting, making themselves greatly in the way, and intensely annoying.

Aunt Roxy placed a bountiful supply of provisions in the carriage, exclaiming, "Ugh! it's no use trustin' to dem ar niggers, they're just sure not to give yer any thin' but flap-jacks an' pone, an' may be a bit of fried chicken. Here's de good things right in dis basket! Now you, Jule, don't you go hookin' the cakes, and you Adam, jest as shua as you tech one drop of that wine, I hope 'twill pisen yer! That's sertain!"

Colonel Arendell and the ladies, to the great joy of the boys, were at last seated in the carriage, and they were soon *en route* for Grassmere. A pleasant drive of about

two hours brought them to their destination. The house was somewhat ancient ; but much larger and handsomer than that at Arendell. The view presented from the road was pleasing. A large, irregularly built white house, with numerous piazzas, and long windows shaded by green blinds, standing in a grove of immense oak-trees ; with an extensive garden containing flowers of every hue, sloping gently down to the road. The fences were covered with climbing roses and jasmine ; and on each side of the house stood an arbor, adorned with the same aromatic luxuriance. But that which most attracted Aldeane's notice was, what had once been a beautiful summer-house. It was built of logs covered with bark, and had evidently been handsome and curious. It was now a ruin. The roof was broken in many places ; the posts had fallen away, and it stood a relic of former days, over which time had cast a mantle of decay ; a strange object amid the vernal bloom and freshness that surrounded it. A wild trumpet-vine had essayed to hide its decline in its garniture of beauty, and had partially succeeded. It had crept over the walls and roof, leaving, however, parts of the rough bark visible, which looked out grimly from the verdant framing. Pendants of the vine floated upon the air, and drooped within the house from apertures in the roof. It was a beautiful object, but totally incompatible with those surrounding it.

The housekeeper—a little thin, nervous mulatto woman—with a troop of little negroes, met them at the gate, seemingly overjoyed at their unexpected arrival.

“Here, you Jube and Andy!” she exclaimed, “whar’s your manners? Take your young mass’s horses. I’lar for’t, if you don’t move a leetle faster I’ll pull all de wool off dem thick heads o’ yourn! Lor’, leetle missie,” as she lifted Jessie out of the carriage, “how yer has grown since yer old Aunt Samiry seed ye last! I’m right glad ter see yer, Mass’r John an’ Miss Idy, and Miss Nora.

De house is fit for yer to walk right inter, just the same as if I knowd you was a comin'."

Aunt Samira stopped her volubility, having exhausted her breath, and Mrs. Arendell replied to her greeting, and those of the other servants, as she led the way to the parlor, a large, handsome room, well furnished, but, after the manner of a past age, every thing was dark, heavy, and substantial. The children soon went out to go with the negroes in search of ripe fruit; and after the ladies had rested, Colonel Arendell said:—

"Ida, I am going to show Miss Guthrie over the house. Will you come with us?"

"Spare me the infliction!" replied Mrs. Arendell, laughing. "It is too warm for such exercise. Leonore and I will look around Aunt Samira's domains while you are gone."

"Come, then, Miss Guthrie. I don't think you will find it very fatiguing!" said the colonel, as he led the way upstairs. "There are some curious things in this old house, at least so they seem to me. It is the house in which my parents lived and died. This is the room they usually occupied, and their shadows do so still. Don't shudder. I do not mean their ghosts—but merely their portraits, which are lifelike."

The room was large, and well but gloomily furnished. A high-posted bedstead, with crimson curtains, stood in one corner, and between the windows a large old-fashioned bureau. High-backed chairs, grim and black with age, were scattered about the room; above the mantelpiece, which was very long and low, hung two oil-paintings—the portraits of the departed owners. Mr. Arendell appeared to be about of the same age as the son who was now contemplating him; possessing, too, in a great degree, the same physiognomy; the same calm gray eyes, the same high forehead and light, wavy hair; but the firm, sternly-set mouth, which gave so much expression to the countenance of the father, was wanting in that of

the son. From his mother, Aldeane perceived that the colonel had derived that feature, whose very form betrayed a vacillating mind. Brilliant conceptions and high resolves were written clearly in the speaking eyes and open brow: but the languor and indecision that rested on the face of the portrayed mother had been largely conveyed to that of her son. It was a pleasant, pretty face that looked down upon them, but totally devoid of any expression of firmness or endurance.

A long and interesting survey of many other rooms of the old house was almost completed, when Colonel Arendell ushered Aldeane into an apartment furnished in a more modern style than any she had seen. Numerous ornaments were scattered about the room; a piano stood in one corner, and a guitar hung above it. Colonel Arendell asked Aldeane to play. She tried both instruments, but they were sadly out of tune.

"No wonder," he remarked, "they have not been touched for nearly twenty years. The hand that used to draw sweet music from them has for long, long years been cold in death."

"Indeed! Did you ever live here, Colonel Arendell? I mean, of course, since you have become a man."

"No; never since I have been married. My first wife was very anxious to remove hither, but I strongly objected. The place is fraught with too many bitter recollections. Ah! Miss Guthrie, I am suffering here to-day."

Aldeane glanced at him in surprise. His lips were compressed, and his face distorted, as if by acute pain. "Let us leave it, then!" she exclaimed. "I know there must be some deep sorrow buried within these walls that still lives for you. Come, sir, do not stay! I entreat!"

"Yes, yes! We will look at this room before we go!" he replied, preceding her into a room of the same dimensions, and which was evidently a library. It was richly furnished, and well supplied with books. A small iron

safe occupied a space between two book-shelves; upon it stood a portfolio full of papers.

"Here, in this room," said Colonel Arendell, "was the foulest disgrace, openly branded upon my family. Oh! William, William! I believed you guilty then! 'Twould almost be a comfort to believe it still."

Aldeane was distressed at the tone of despair, and the remorseful manner in which these words were spoken. Looking up, Colonel Arendell read these emotions in her face. "We will go now, Miss Guthrie," he said. "Do not be frightened, child. To you I speak in enigmas. Well! 'tis better so. You do not now understand me, but you will at some time. Yes, yes!"

He arose and paced the apartment excitedly, while Aldeane regarded him with perplexed and sorrowful looks. At length she said, "Come, sir! let us not stay here longer! The very air seems chilled! I can not dwell with mysteries. Come. Do come away! Let us go where there is sunlight and air."

"Yes, we will go now. The mystery will be unraveled at some time, my child. Do not speak of this before my family; I am always calm before them; but a visit to this place always unnerves me." He passed his hand over his face; Aldeane noticed that it was white and trembling. She was deeply affected by his emotion, and thought "there must indeed be some great cause to to produce so strange an effect upon one who possesses so gay and careless a temperament as he always exhibits."

They left the room, and with a feeling of relief Aldeane issued from the gloomy place, yet with a thrill of terror, that prompted her to look back as she crossed the threshold. Colonel Arendell noticed it, and taking her hand led her down the stairs, saying; "Your face is blanched, and your hands are cold with horror at my mysteries. This is needless. Call back color and

warmth, and let nothing trouble you. You are too young for that yet."

She was glad when they joined Mrs. Arendell and the children upon the piazza. The sunlight was cheering, and the sight of other faces pleasant, after the gloomy scene up-stairs.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell; "you both look as if you had seen ghosts. Has John been telling you some dreadful legend, Miss Guthrie? I remember that the first time I came here he thought proper to turn pale in one of the rooms, and when I asked the reason, and insisted upon knowing it, he told me the most dreadful story concerning it—oh! ten times more horrible than any ghost story I ever heard, and so in two or three other chambers, until I became perfectly horrified; and I believe he was himself actually frightened at his own mendacity. Well! I asked Aunt Samira if any of his tales were true, and none of them were. They were mere fictions invented on the spot I suppose; but though he goes through with his old tricks he has never been able to frighten me once."

Aunt Samira, appeared at the end of the piazza and announced dinner. They went to the dining-room, where they found the table bountifully spread. Aunt Roxy's care seemed to have been expended in vain, and indeed it had been, for when the baskets of edibles had been brought in, Samira scornfully surveyed each article as it was unpacked, and at last observed: "Well! now, I do wonder, if dat ole fool Roxanny 'spected me to put dat ar trash before white quality? I reckon not. Here you Sal,—” making a dash at a little black, who was nefariously abstracting tarts from a basket,—“you jist let them be, an' go hunt eggs, an' Betty you make up a fire, quicker 'n lightnin'. Dy'e hear?"

So Jule appropriated as much of the cake as he desired to his own use, and distributed the rest among the

children, while Uncle Adam refreshed himself with a glass of wine and some cold chicken.

Dinner was at last concluded, and after numerous toasts to Aldeane's health and prosperity had been drunk; all prepared for a ramble over the grounds. They proved to be very beautiful and extensive. Colonel Arendell and Aldeane were walking together; they reached the vine-o'ergrown arbor. Within was a crumbling seat; she entered and sat down; the colonel stood before her. She instinctively felt that he alone could tell the history of the old place; therefore she said:—

"Why have you suffered this place to decay, Colonel Arendell, when you have kept all surrounding it in such excellent repair? Do you fancy this wild beauty?"

"Somewhat," he replied, glancing back. His wife and Leonore were discussing some household matter, with Aunt Samira, near the house; the children were playing at some distance. "I do not let this ruin stand for that alone," he continued; "but because I can not find it in my heart to pull down this ancient arbor, in which I so often played in childhood. Neither will I assist it to remain, since here was passed the bitterest moments of my life. This spot is intimately associated with memories of one, whom I have not seen for years. We parted in anger, but we had loved in childhood, and even now my heart is bursting with the memory and reality of love. Remorse, too, for a deed done by the instigation of one who should have led me from all evil, is eating my heart away."

"And can you not repair that evil?" questioned Aldeane.

"Not now! not now! Why do you ask me?" he replied, fiercely smiting his forehead with his open hand. "But it shall be done," he continued more gently. "Soon, soon! But not now. I can not do it now, my child. You have seen me in my true character to-day, a creature

of passionate impulses, and morbid feelings. They," nodding toward his wife and children, "know me only in dissemblment. But do not let my words or actions mar your happiness, or cause you a second thought. I am generally happy enough; those feelings which you have seen so greatly excited to-day, are usually dormant; it requires the weird influence of Grassmere, to call them into violent action."

"Miss Aldeane, ma wants you to come and see the cactus in bloom; it is beautiful," cried Leonore, who unperceived had joined them. "You look as grave as a judge. I don't believe you have enjoyed yourself one bit to-day. Father has been imbuing you with his dislike of the place, and with his melancholy feelings. Come away! I won't let you speak to him again, while we are here!"

Colonel Arendell laughed, and left them, to talk with his negro overseer, an intelligent and trustworthy man, who had the full control of affairs at Grassmere. Aldeane joined Leonore and Mrs. Arendell in a walk through the flower-garden; and afterward, when sitting in one of the arbors, eating early fruit and conversing gayly, she found ample employment in fashioning into wreaths and bouquets the numerous blossoms they had plucked. Jessie, Leonore, and Mrs. Arendell, were soon decked with wreaths, and Aldeane was about to throw the remaining flowers aside, when Jessie exclaimed:—

"Oh! Miss Guthrie, you haven't any flowers. You must have some too!"

Aldeane smiling, glanced at her black dress, and said, "I can't wear them now!"

"Oh, yes, you must!" returned Jessie, "because it is your birthday, you know. Do put some in your hair."

Aldeane joined together a spray of jasmine and white rose-buds, and to Jessie's delight placed them in her hair, with the inquiry: "Will that do?"

"No," answered Mrs. Arendell. "It is too great a contrast; besides, white and black are too somber."

"I will add some golden-hearted violets then. I can not wear gayer colors yet!" and her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her mother, whose favorite flowers she then held.

The summer afternoon was waning. The sun was gilding the rough trunks of the old trees, and lighting up as with fire the large windows of the mansion, when Frank ran up to tell them that the carriage would soon be ready. They repaired to the house to partake of some slight refreshment, and soon after departed, leaving Aunt Samira, Uncle Charley, the overseer, and the sable crew, they professed to govern, in great delight at their master's commendation.

All seemed in excellent spirits, and the ride home, enlivened by jests and laughter, passed quickly. Still, thoughts of Colonel Arendell's strange conduct throughout the day would intrude upon Aldeane's mind. It seemed scarcely possible that the man who was now heartily participating in the merriment of those around him, without one shade of gloomy thought upon his countenance, could be the same who, at numerous times throughout the day, had betrayed such serious and troubled emotions. Yet she liked him better in the real character of which she had caught momentary glimpses, than in the gay dissemblment in which he usually appeared.

"How have you enjoyed yourself, Miss Guthrie?" he asked, as he assisted her to alight on their arrival at Arendell.

"Excellently, but very strangely, for I have passed through a labyrinth of riddles."

"They will all be solved at some time. But not now! not now!" he replied, a troubled look passing over his face. "Go into the house, my dear, the dew is falling. I

shall seek forgetfulness of sorrow by indulging in a pipe in the fresh air."

Aldeane took Jessie's hand, and, sadly perplexed, entered the house. After supper, music and the society of a few friends effectually dispelled all gloomy thoughts, and at a late hour she retired to rest, having well enjoyed her eighteenth birthday.

CHAPTER X.

"JANUARY AND MAY."

QUITE unconsciously to herself her piquancy and grace upon that evening had won for Aldeane more admiration than any beauty of face or form could possibly have done. More than one young gentleman returned to his home with visions of her as its loved and loving mistress. But these, young as they were, for some time at least, kept their own counsel, and it was only from the most unwelcome source that Aldeane Guthrie received any intimation of her power.

Upon the following day, accompanied by the children, she went a short distance up the river in search of yellow jasmine, which they assured her grew there in great quantities, and the party having pursued their search together in vain, the boys left her and Jessie, asking them not to leave the spot, and promising soon to return with the floral treasure.

Being slightly fatigued Aldeane suffered Jessie to wander a short distance from her, and sat down at the foot of a large beech-tree which overhung the water. Fearing Jessie might go too far, she turned to look after her, when a voice speaking her name startled her violently.

"I did not know you were here," she involuntarily exclaimed, starting to her feet, and regarding the intruder with no flattering expression.

"Pardon me," returned Mr. Blake, for it were he. "The boys, whom I met just now, told me you were here, and I

could not resist this intrusion—if it is one,” he added, with a gallant smile and bow.

“It certainly is, sir,” retorted Aldeane, making no attempt to hide the dislike she held for him.

“One moment! One moment, Miss Guthrie, I beg!” he interposed, as she took Jessie’s hand and was about to leave the spot. “Do not give me the unhappiness of knowing that I drive you from this place. One word, and if you still desire it I will retire.”

“That one word is quite unnecessary, sir,” she returned, her cheeks flushing like fire, for she well knew to what that word would tend.

“It must be spoken!” cried Blake, eagerly advancing toward her, “and upon your reply the happiness of my future life depends.”

Even at that moment, when she was both angered and alarmed, a ludicrous thought presented itself to her mind. “Luckily,” she thought, “if that be so, I should judge he has but a few years longer to live,” a reflection by no means flattering to Mr. Blake’s carefully dyed hair and whiskers, and the scientifically hidden crows’-feet that surrounded his bright, keen eyes.

“You can not have failed, Miss Aldeane,” he continued rapidly, “to see that I have regarded you, from the first moment of our acquaintance, with a high degree of esteem and admiration. Allow me, then, Miss Aldeane, to say, that during that entire period I have also loved you, that I love you now, and entreat you to become my wife.”

“That can never be,” she replied with dignity. “Pray say no more, sir, it can never be;” and calling to Jessie, who had escaped her grasp, again attempted to leave him.

He was in no degree disconcerted by her answer, but had evidently expected it. “Observe, Miss Guthrie,” he said as he laid a detaining hand upon her arm, which she instantly threw off,—“observe, Miss Guthrie, I have not

asked you to love me, though if you should marry me, I have no fear but my constant kindness would lead you to do so. Your love I do not exact, although I ask you to be my wife."

"You are very kind," returned Aldeane, with a curling lip, "but I am too young to consider the possibility of marrying without love."

"Ah, Miss Aldeane, that is so very natural!" he exclaimed in affected admiration; "but really one of your amiable disposition could not fail to love one to whom you were advantageously married."

Aldeane looked at him a moment with flashing eyes, and then most quietly said: "You wish, sir, to remind me that I am a poor governess, and you a rich planter."

"Oh, no! no!" he returned earnestly; "believe me that I have no wish to remind you of any thing unpleasant in your own position, while I may surely be excused for wishing you to remember whatever is agreeable in mine."

"I remember both," she answered, "but neither influence me. It can be no secret to you, Mr. Blake, that I possess a natural antipathy to you, as real and strong as if I were a victim of your enmity and malice."

Strangely as she looked at him, his head drooped, and every vestige of color forsook his face. "Pardon me," she added quickly, though she could imagine no reason for this sudden change in him.—"pardon me if I have spoken plainly, but it is better so at such a time. Perhaps I ought to thank you, Mr. Blake, for the honor you have done me. At any rate I do so, while I must decline it." And again she attempted to leave him.

"Wait, wait!" he exclaimed huskily, once more detaining her. "Indeed, Miss Aldeane, I do love you; just consider the matter for a moment now! Pray do. Perhaps you refuse me, because I was once Colonel Arendell's overseer, but I was also the cousin of his first wife; the family is unexceptionable, I assure you!"

Aldeane could not restrain a smile, and though it was any thing but encouraging in its nature, it appeared to give Mr. Blake heart to proceed, for he continued rapidly :—

“ Besides, Miss Aldeane, just think, I hold as good a position in society as the Arendells themselves, and I assure you I am much wealthier.”

“ I am really anxious to return to the house,” said Aldeane, in reply. “ If you wish to serve me in any way, Mr. Blake, do so in the only way possible—by allowing me to leave you.”

“ That you may consider what I have said,” he exclaimed, eagerly. “ Really, Miss Aldeane, in justice to both of us, you should do that.”

“ I have given the subject all the consideration it requires,” she retorted, impatiently. “ I can not and I will not marry you.”

He seemed then, for the first time, to be more angry than grieved. “ You are very proud, and very determined,” he said. “ I have known those of your blood before who were so, but if all was known, you might find yourself with little cause to despise an alliance with me.”

She saw the word liar, written upon his very face, and it suddenly flashed upon her that if she knew all, she might find abundant cause to despise him. “ What,” she exclaimed, with a recollection of Colonel Arendell’s words, “ did you, too, know my family? Oh, what is the mystery concerning them; I know there is one. What is it? Pray, what is it?”

“ Listen to me,” he replied, drawing a step near her, “ I will tell you, if you will become my wife.”

“ My curiosity is not so great,” she answered.

“ But the benefit it would be to you, Miss Aldeane; think of all the wonderful tales you have read of the disclosures of secrets, and then imagine what the benefit will be, and then you will fall short of the reality.”

Aldeane looked at him with widely distended eyes.

"I do not exaggerate," he continued. "I can tell you what you would give worlds to know." He paused and looked at her.

"You shall say no more to me," she presently said. "I am happy and contented in my ignorance."

"But you can no longer be in ignorance that a great benefit is within your reach, if you believe my word to be that of an honorable man."

He knew that it was likely she had heard that questioned, yet he was mad enough in his earnestness to speak of it.

"I will question Colonel Arendell," she thought. "If there is a benefit within my reach, he will tell me so. I know in my case, Arthur would not have me sacrifice myself to this designing man;" and so once more she gave him to understand that his suit was hopeless.

"I shall take further opportunity of assuring myself of that," he said with a sinister smile, as he heard the boys crashing through the underbrush, "and again, Miss Guthrie, I should advise you to consider the subject well."

He bowed, and disappeared. The boys coming up with their arms full of wild jasmine, were surprised to find that their governess took but little heed of it, but hurried them home, exclaiming that she was tired, and confirming her words, upon her arrival at the house, by hastening to her room, and remaining there for hours.

Strangely enough, amid all the excitement and passion in which she entered the room, and without owing to herself the slightest reason for the act, she took from its resting-place the ivory case Belle had dropped upon her lap one memorable summer eve; she looked long and thoughtfully upon the portrait it contained.

"What a frank, honest face," she mused, "how kind he used to be; I wonder if he would be now, or if even

he, in my position, would find some cause or excuse for insult?" and then, passionately exclaiming that she had been that day insulted, she clasped her hands over her face, and burst into tears.

She wept long and passionately, and then a sudden belief that Blake had sought deliberately to ensnare and deceive her, seized upon her mind.

The longer she thought of this, and the opinion she had formed of her unwelcome admirer, the more she became convinced of this.

"He must think me the weakest of all weak-minded women," she said more than once, "to suppose that I would marry him, even for the wealth of the Indies, much less without an explanation of the mystery he had conjured up;" and then reminding herself that if there had been any secret existing that could be of possible benefit to herself and Arthur, her mother would have informed them of it, she endeavored to dismiss the subject from her mind.

And this she succeeded in doing to a far greater degree than, in any weak-minded woman, could have been expected, after she had written to Arthur, and, without mentioning her reasons, urged him to prompt Charles Evans to renewed exertions to discover the paper that had been left by their mother in his father's charge.

And so she said nothing to Colonel Arendell; and when Arthur's reply to her letter arrived, saying that all endeavors to discover the paper had been in vain, she thought, with some amusement, of the secret with which she had for a moment connected it; and thinking, with relief, that Mr. Blake had not again adverted to it, dismissed the matter from her mind, and devoted herself entirely to her somewhat harassing duties.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

THE heat was intense. Man, beast, and herb seemed fainting beneath its fervency. The sun poured his fiercest rays down through the mimosas, oaks, and cedars which surrounded Arendell House, peered boldly into the darkened rooms, and filled with blinding light the wide piazzas. It was, indeed, one of the most oppressive days of what had been an unusually warm season. The inmates of the house, both white and black, had retired to the coolest parts of the house or grounds, and performed their duties wearily and unwillingly.

In the parlor were Aldeane and Leonore, vainly endeavoring to concentrate their wandering attention upon a new and difficult piece of music. Leonore sat at the piano, playing discordantly and looking very discontented, and wondering greatly why her mother had insisted upon her taking a lesson upon that particular morning, when it would have been so easy to have postponed it to another day. Breaking the rule for once could do no harm. Aldeane inwardly thought the same, as she corrected her pupil's frequent mistakes, and emphatically played over the difficult parts which Leonore insisted upon playing wrong. A cloud rested upon the faces of both.

"My dear Miss Aldeane, do let me rest a little while," exclaimed Leonore, at length. "I declare, this dreadful lesson makes me faint even to look at it. As for you, I should think you would die, with that black dress on, thin as it is. Do you know, when grandpapa died, about two

years ago—I had never seen grandpapa, you know—my greatest trouble was lest mamma would put on mourning, and insist upon my doing so also. I detest black.”

“I pray you may never be called upon to wear it,” answered Aldeane, with a sigh, glancing at the little white-robed form beside her, and, as she was about to utter some penitent excuse for speaking upon so painful a subject, adding encouragingly, “Only half an hour more, Leonore. Come, make an effort. You know your mamma is so anxious that you should cultivate your talent for music.”

“The only talent that I have, unfortunately,” remarked Leonore, parenthetically.

Aldeane laughed cheerfully. “Well! then you must bestow all the more pains upon it. Play that over again, if you please.”

With a weary sigh, Leonore turned on the piano stool, and complied with this request, her eyes often wandering from the page of music to the scene beyond the open window. Suddenly Aldeane was startled by the unusual exclamation, “Good Heavens! Uncle Fred! Uncle Fred!”

Before she could ask the meaning of these interjections, Leonore, overturning the piano-stool and an ottoman in her haste, had ran from the room. Aldeane turned toward the window for a solution of the mystery. A cloud of dust was slowly subsiding in the road; a horse and buggy were standing before the gate, and hurrying up the gravel walk was Frederic Morgan.

Yes, though he was darker and much changed during the two years of absence and travel, in spite of the long dark whiskers and heavy mustache, she recognized him, and with feelings she could not herself comprehend, watched his approach.

In a moment she heard him exclaim, in the old tones and with the same joyous laugh as of yore, “Ah, Leonore! why, bless me, how you have grown; and so you knew

your old uncle at a glance! Where is your mother?" Then followed the sound of embracing, and the next moment his quick step was heard upon the piazza.

"Why Fred Morgan! where did you come from?" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell, as she appeared at the door of the sitting-room. "Dear me, how delighted I am to see you, and how you have changed!"

"Where have I come from?" answered her brother, returning her cordial embrace. "Why, just from England, to be sure. I went home, and found everybody away, gone to the White Mountains again, I believe. So as nobody expected me home, I thought they needn't know of my being in the country. So, instead of writing to them to come home, I embraced the only chance I could hope to get for some time, and ran down to see you."

"Well, I am delighted to see you; and how long are you going to stay?" inquired Mrs. Arendell, anxiously.

"Now, that's a pretty question to ask a man, the minute he gets into the house," returned Mr. Morgan laughing; "but to satisfy you, I'll tell you. Two or three weeks at the longest. I must really begin to practice this fall; I've been studying famously while in Europe, attended lectures and walked hospitals enough to make me a first-rate physician, though I don't suppose I shall be. But here are Frank and Eddy! How do you do, sirs? Don't you know your Uncle Fred? And there is little Jessie. She's as pretty as a rose-bud; and so like sister Jessie was Ida!"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Arendell, with a sigh; "but how are ma and Annie, pretty well?"

"I haven't seen them, you know, but I believe mother is well; Annie is a weakly little thing, it is for the sake of her health that they have gone to the mountains this summer, I think. But, Ida, where is Arendell?"

"Out in the fields, somewhere. Here Jule, go look for

your master; be quick, now. Tell him a gentleman wants to see him, but don't tell him who it is."

"Oh, what warm weather, Ida," ejaculated Mr. Morgan. "'An' thou lovest me,' let me have some water. Had you not kept me talking so fast since my arrival, my tongue would be glued to the roof of my mouth. I thought I should never reach here in that uncovered buggy, driving over that dusty road."

"Poor fellow, I pity you; you shall have the water, but while you wait for it, step into the parlor, it is much cooler there," answered Mrs. Arendell.

During this time, Aldeane had been looking round for some place of escape, but found upon trial that the door opening into the hall was locked, and the only other entrance was from the piazza, upon which the family were then standing. The windows also were all upon that side. She had just finished her survey, when Mrs. Arendell and Mr. Morgan, followed by the children, entered.

"Ah! Miss Guthrie, are you here?" said Mrs. Arendell, as Aldeane arose, blushing confusedly at their appearance. "Let me introduce you to my brother." Fred bowed indifferently. "Miss Aldeane Guthrie, Mr. Frederic Morgan."

Mr. Morgan glanced up quickly as her name was pronounced, gazed at her for a moment intently, then exclaiming: "Is it possible that you are here, Miss Guthrie? I am very happy to see you. Miss Ashton was away, like all the rest, when I was at home; that explains why I did not know you were here," and he hastily advanced to greet her.

Aldeane still retained the same position in which they had found her, and placed her fingers coldly within the hand that pressed them warmly, while its owner went on, "You must really excuse me, Miss Guthrie, for not recognizing you at once; you are so changed—where are those

bonny brown curls, and——” glancing at her black dress.

“My mother is dead,” she replied, sadly.

“Ah,” and his eye traversed rapidly over her face and figure.

“Why, you seem to be quite old friends!” interrupted Mrs. Arendell, in astonishment.

“Certainly we are,” replied Mr. Morgan. “I’ve known Miss Guthrie these six years.”

“Why Aldeane, how is it you have never mentioned him?” inquired Mrs. Arendell.

“I had not the least idea that Mr. Morgan was your brother, and therefore, had no reason for doing so,” returned Aldeane.

“He is my step-brother,” replied Mrs. Arendell. “I am glad you know each other so well. Aldeane, I believe, has been a little homesick of late; it will do her good to talk of old times, and mutual friends.”

“Well, really, this is a surprise!” exclaimed a voice at the door, and in a moment more Colonel Arendell was shaking the hand of his brother-in-law warmly. “Why, Fred! how are you? You’re the very last person I should have expected to see; but none the less welcome for that! How long have you been here?”

“About half an hour.”

“A half hour! and I suppose Ida and Leonore have kept you talking ever since. I wonder they ever thought to send for me?”

“I don’t know that I should have done so, had not Fred inquired for you,” said Mrs. Arendell, laughing. “But Fred, I suppose you would like to rest a little before lunch, which will be ready in an hour. Here Jule, take Mr. Morgan to his old room; and Pete, take back the horse and buggy to Loring, and tell Aunt Roxy to come.”

“I wonder,” thought Aldeane, as Mr. Morgan left the

apartment, continuing the reverie into which she had fallen,—“I really wonder what he thinks of me, or at least, what he will when he discovers that I am a mere dependent here? Oh! I can see now how when we meet, he will look at me superciliously, and bow condescendingly,” and she felt a very unworthy shame of her position, battling with the good sense that told her that honest poverty is never a disgrace. Bitter feelings arose in her heart. Pride ruled there, and its despotism was keenly felt in that hour.

“Oh! why am I here to be despised! I wonder what he is thinking of me now.” In a tumult of false pride, and weak, puerile feelings, she hastily left the parlor, and hastened to her chamber to indulge in a flood of angry tears.

Mr. Morgan, as he stood before the glass in his dressing-room, thought, “What can Aldeane Guthrie be here for? Can it be that she is the governess *Ida* wrote to me about? She may be; she has lost her mother, and that Nevins—*Belle* has often told me—hated those children. I wonder what *Arthur* is doing. I wish I had thought to inquire at *Grenville’s* when I was in Boston. Aldeane looked as proud as *Lucifer* to-day. I presume she thought she must show me, that she considers herself as good as ever, but she doesn’t, or she would not take such steps to impress me with the same idea, which I have never lost yet. I must consider the best way to bring her around. How foolish she is. I really thought her more sensible.”

Just at this point of his cogitations, *Jule* entered with some water.

“Well, *Julius Cæsar!*” exclaimed Mr. Morgan, “how are you, and all the other braves, and warriors, kings, and heroes, getting along?”

“Fust rate, mass’r!” returned the grinning black.

“Well, it’s cheering to hear that. I suppose some of

you have been sold 'down South,' since I was here last, eh?"

The boy looked at him, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, as he replied: "No, sah, Miss Idy wouldn't 'low dat, an' Miss Aldeane, I tell you, would go agin it too."

"She would, eh? How long has she been here, Jule?"

"A year dis bery month, sah."

"Ah! and is she visiting here."

"No, Mass'r Frederie, she am de goberness, and is mighty peart, I kin tell ye, and Mass'r Blake thinks so too. She told him somethin' the other day that sent him away in a jiffy, and he hasn't been nigh dis plantation sence." And Jule grinned delightfully, adding, "he might a-knowed, that Miss Aldeane wouldn't eben look at any ole nigger driver."

"You had better not speak so," said Mr. Morgan laughing; "he may have you some day, perhaps."

"No, sah, he won't. Mass'r John don't sell his niggers. Miss Idy wouldn't let him do that no how."

"And you say, you like Miss Guthrie," said Frederie. "I suppose she spoils you all. And do Colonel Arendell, and Miss Ida, like her as well?"

"I guess they does, sah, and Miss Nora jes lobes her dearly. Dere's the bell, sah!"

"Poor Alie!" thought Mr. Morgan, as he prepared to answer the summons. "I know this life is distasteful if not positively hateful to her. How different she looks now, to what she did when I parted from her in Boston. She was really quite pretty then, though like me, she has no particuar beauty to boast of, especially now that those glossy brown curls are tucked up. I never could see any reason why girls always try to make themselves as plain as a nun when they become teachers, yet they almost invariably do. Well! although they are kind to her here, yet I know that she thinks like I do, that teaching is a hard business. I don't like it!"

Miss Guthrie did not appear at lunch that day. "A bad headache," Zettie said, keeping her in her own apartment.

"I thought she looked pale this morning, when we were in the parlor with Unele Fred," remarked Leonore. "I knew she would be sick after giving me a lesson this warm morning; and I should have been sick too, had not uncle's providential arrival interrupted the lesson. I wish some one would come at every such time."

"Leonore, you are dreadfully lazy!" said Mrs. Arendell laughing.

While Mr. Morgan thought, "Ah! a headache, I don't remember of ever having heard her complain of it before. But of course it is this confounded teaching," then, turning to Mrs. Arendell, he inquired:—

"Is Miss Guthrie a good music-teacher? She used to sing and play well."

"She is the best teacher Leonore has ever had; doubtless she performs as well, if not better, than she did when you parted. I presume you will soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself. But I am afraid after being in Europe so long, you will have no taste for our home melodies."

"Indeed!" he returned, "that remains to be proved. If Miss Guthrie sings half as well as she used to, I think you will find yourself mistaken. My traveling companion, Raymond, used to be wild about her voice. I must write to him that she is here, and, with your permission, Ida, ask him to come here, and listen to it once more."

"I wish you would," said Mrs. Arendell. "I know you were jesting, Fred, but, I am quite anxious to see this paragon of whom you have so often written. I declare!" she added suddenly, "in future I shall be more communicative about my family. If I had been in the past, I should have known long ago that you and Aldéane were acquainted."

"And it appears that Miss Guthrie is equally reticent concerning her friends," remarked her brother, with a curious smile. "But it is a wonder that mamma never mentioned her knowledge of your governess. Miss Ashton has of course mentioned to her the names of her friend's employers."

"Well, I am afraid," said Mrs. Arendell, coloring, "that mamma was a little piqued that I did not ask her to choose me a governess, but really, Miss Osmond was so unsatisfactory, that I thought it best to trust entirely to Professor Grenville, and say nothing to mamma about it."

"Or it may be possible," suggested Colonel Arendell, archly, "that mamma may not have cared to claim acquaintance with our governess. This is a queer world, you know!"

Mr. Morgan laughed. Mrs. Arendell glanced at her husband indignantly, but, knowing his supposition was highly probable, said nothing.

"Oh, no!" cried Leonore, "that's always your way, papa, to try to find a dark side to the picture. Our world is a very good world, is it not, Uncle Fred?"

"It suits me very well," he returned gayly. "I've had but little trouble in it. Perhaps it is coming though, for you and me both, Leonora."

"God forbid!" said the colonel, as they arose from the table.

Aldeane appeared at tea, apparently as well as usual. A slight hauteur characterized her deportment toward Mr. Morgan; a fact which he failed not to notice, and, with a feeling of amusement and pity, to attribute to its proper source. The night was dark, so they left the piazza earlier than usual, and repaired to the parlor. Mr. Morgan soon took his seat at the piano, and commenced playing light airs, at the same time talking to Mrs. Arendell and the children, who had gathered around

him. Suddenly he played a rich prelude, beckoning to Aldeane and exclaiming:—

“Miss Guthrie, you can sing this! Come!”

It was a song she had often sung with Arthur, it required a powerful effort to sing it now. He had scarcely spoken to her before, and his tone now was peremptory. She wished to refuse; but remembered, as she supposed he also did, that she was a dependent in his sister’s house, and taking the music from his hand seated herself, and sang the song with unusual taste and power.

“Very good! Really very good,” said Mr. Morgan approvingly. “Raymond must really hear you. You remember Raymond, Miss Guthrie?”

It flashed into her mind that he wished to convey the impression that there had been a flirtation between her and the person of whom he spoke. The thought came upon her, too, that perhaps he took this mode of saying that there had been no special friendship between themselves, though he had taken her portrait, and left her his.

She was so overcome by the possibility that he should think she attached any importance to that boyish act, that she rose from her seat, murmured an excuse to Mrs. Arendell, and abruptly left the room.

A few moments later she was rapidly pacing the floor of her own apartment, her hands clasped, and her teeth clinched tightly together, while in a low, passionate voice, she exclaimed: “Oh! why did he come here to torment me? What, though I am poor, I am human! Oh! how he spoke to me to-night. Only two years ago, he would have felt honored, yes, honored, by my company! But now, I am only Mrs. John Arendell’s governess, but I am as proud as ever—yes—and I hate him! I hate him! Oh, why did he come to torment me!”

CHAPTER XII.

A WAR OF WORDS.

ALDEANE was perfectly aware that the frame of mind into which Mr. Morgan's arrival had thrown her was quite uncalled for; and, while she could not change or overcome it, she blamed herself for it as much as a most censorious stranger would have done.

To her extreme annoyance and self-contempt, she was filled with a feeling she had never known before. She had a harrowing suspicion that people "looked down" upon her because of her position, and that she was merely tolerated and patronized; and that, at least from Mr. Morgan, she could not bear.

Of one thing she was quite certain—his conduct toward her was quite different to what it used to be. There was none of the freedom and affability which existed in the happy days at Rose Cottage. Of course, she never for a moment suspected any greater change in her conduct than was justified by that in his, and, therefore, meeting his careless pleasantries, which she chose to consider patronizing impertinences, with most frigid politeness, the coolness between them each day became greater, and led Mrs. Arendell to suppose the friendship between them had never been a warm one, and to attribute her mother's silence regarding Miss Guthrie to a far more charitable motive than that which had been imputed to her by her husband. And thus a slight reserve arose between Aldeane and her employer, which added not a little to her discomfort.

One afternoon Colonel, Mrs. Arendell, and Leonore had gone to Loring, and Mr. Morgan was nowhere to be seen. The children were playing in the garden, leaving Aldeane alone. She soon became weary of the embroidery upon which she was engaged, and went to the library for a book. Her choice was soon made; and she was about to leave the room, when she saw a Raleigh paper, which had just arrived, lying upon the table. She sometimes contributed to it, and taking it up, glanced over it in search of a poem she expected to appear. It was there. She read it over, replaced the paper on the table, and was about to leave the room, when she was startled by the exclamation:—

“Ah! did you write that? I had a suspicion that you did, when I read it this morning. ‘A. G.’ Yes, those are your initials. Come, own that the lines are yours.”

She glanced up, startled and angry, and beheld Mr. Morgan looking at the article over her shoulder.

“Foreign travel has not tended to improve your manners,” she said, tartly, unable to repress her thoughts.

He laughed good-naturedly. “I don’t wonder you think so. But did you write the piece before us?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, why didn’t you say so at once? Then you do write, now?”

“Occasionally.”

“Will you let me see some of your late productions? I wish to see if you have improved much.”

“There are papers containing some about the house, I believe, sir,” she replied.

“Ah!” He seemed surprised and half angry at her curt replies. Aldeane turned to leave the room. He stood before the door. She looked at him scornfully, her proud soul standing forth plainly in her expressive face. “Why does he not stand back and let me pass?” she thought. Her anger rose high as he fixed his calm blue eyes upon her and inquired:—

"Does Miss Ashton correspond with you?"

"My friends are not all purse-proud and worthless!" she retorted, angrily. "Yes, sir, Miss Ashton does correspond with me!"

"I supposed so! Has she returned from her tour yet?"

"She is now at Rose Cottage."

"Where is Arthur now?"

"In Boston."

"Can nothing make her communicative?" thought Frederic. Then to Aldeane: "What is he doing there? Not dragging out his life as a salesman, or dry-goods clerk, I hope? His handsome face would be a great attraction to the ladies."

"I am perfectly aware, Mr. Morgan," returned Aldeane, with dignity, "that you feel not the slightest interest in the question you have asked; nevertheless, I will answer it; after which I hope you will allow me to leave the room, which, you can perceive, I have desired to do for some time. My brother is studying law, in the office of John Halcombe, in Boston. Chester Halcombe and he anticipate taking John's practice in a few months—as soon as they are admitted to the bar."

"Ah! so he may be a judge after all! I remember Miss Isabella used to call him that years ago."

"Permit me to pass, if you please, sir!"

"I prefer not to—take a chair. I should like to converse with you."

His words and manner irritated her greatly.

"Mr. Morgan, I do not wish to remain here," she replied, "and I will not. Remember that if I am a dependent in Mrs. Arendell's house, I am not subject to your orders!"

"I see you still retain your old spirit," he returned. "But really I do not wish to offend you. We were once good friends. Why should we quarrel now? Come, shake hands, and as Frank would say 'make it up.'"

Aldeane remained silent, not attempting to take his proffered hand.

"Ah! you are obdurate! How have I offended?"

"By keeping me here against my will; by showing in every action, a hundred times a day, that I am an inferior, an 'upper servant,' as they would say in Europe! Do not ask how you have offended!"

"Nonsense! Miss Guthrie, I haven't brought away any such foolish notions. All the false pride is on your side, not mine! Shake hands, will you?"

"No! Let me pass!" returned Aldeane irefully. "I wish you would go from that door and never return! your presence is hateful to me! Let me go!"

He stepped aside, astounded at her vehemence. She darted past him, and was soon venting her feelings in her own chamber; while Frederic picking up the book she had dropped, muttered; "Heavens! I never dreamed of raising such a storm! yet although she is so passionate, which I never knew before, I can't help liking her! Poor little thing, she fancies that I despise her for being poor. I only admire her the more now that she has shown the ability and energy to fulfill her duty so well, and obtain such an honorable living. Well! I hope still to propitiate her before I leave."

A week quickly flew by—a week of keen unhappiness to Aldeane. Every careless action on the part of Mr. Morgan offended her. She lived in a feverish state which it is impossible to describe; but she schooled herself to bear his coolness, and seeming neglect, and even to look kindly upon the haughty pride, which she conceived separated them. She thought of his associations during the past two years; how that intercourse with the aristocracy of Europe must have changed his republican ideas and taught him to despise poverty and labor, however worthy.

She noticed, with gladness, his kindness to the slaves,

and their respect and esteem for him; though the thought burnt deeply into her heart, "He is kinder to them than to me, because he thinks there is no fear of familiarity from them. He is the same as of old to others; changed only to me." She never for a moment imagined that the change was in herself. She sometimes almost regretted her scornful rejection of his overtures of friendship, but pride forbade her to make any advances toward conciliating him. A strange and undefinable feeling ruled her. He possessed a certain power over her, which, although even to herself she would never acknowledge it, he had always held, but had never exercised so fully, as during those days of estrangement. In olden times he had been to her what he still was to others—genial and gay, overflowing with wit and laughter; a general torment, also a universal favorite; now a jest never passed between them, and she seldom even smiled at his sallies. She sighed that, even in her heart, she could no longer call him her friend, she was fully conscious that of all on earth, his friendship she should most dearly prize. Yet she made no effort to obtain it, and he remained as distant as ever. His presence was very irksome to her; and she was glad when she heard that he was to accompany Colonel Arendell to Raleigh, to remain their several days.

The morning that they were to leave, she stood with the family upon the piazza to see them off. Mr. Morgan shook hands with and kissed his sister, and the family, but to Aldeane merely bowed politely, and then hurried down the walk in obedience to the colonel's loud calls and solicitations. She felt much mortified at this slight, and still more so when Jessie exclaimed:—

"Why, ma! Uncle Fred never shook hands with Miss Aldeane, and he kissed all the rest of us. I think it was right mean of him!"

"Oh! he was in a great hurry, my child!" returned

Mrs. Arendell, surprised and annoyed at her brother's conduct, yet anxious to palliate it in Aldeane's sight. "Miss Guthrie, you must not mind this neglect. I know it was not intentional."

Aldeane knew to the contrary, but made no reply, and turned away to the school-room, and while she heard little Jessie spell, or Frank read, or bade Eddie cease crying over a seemingly insoluble sum in division, she thought how happy she was that he was gone, and sincerely wished that he would not come back. Once or twice she caught herself listening for footsteps below, and she thought, as the children mournfully said, "that it was very lonely," but she attributed that to the absence of Colonel Arendell. The house seemed really desolate without him, it would be as gay as ever when he came back, especially if Frederic Morgan was not with him. That day for the first time since his visit, she felt as happy and joyous as of old, and was indeed herself again. The next morning having an errand to the kitchen, Aldeane entered it, and found Aunt Roxy busily engaged in peeling peaches to dry.

"Where is Zettie, Aunt Roxy," she inquired.

"Out 'long wid de rest ob de young niggas, Miss Aldeane, in de orchard a gettin' peaches. I neber did see sich a lot ob young rapscallions, and Zet tops 'em all. But I 'clar for't, missie, ye looks a heap better'n you have for more'n a week! What has ailed ye? You've looked so poor an' droopin' like."

"Oh! I have been pretty well, Aunt Roxy. Don't say I look sick now, for Mrs. Arendell has just granted the children and me a week's holiday."

"Jes' what she orte done a month ago," muttered Aunt Roxy. "But, I say, Miss Aldeane, it's a pity Mars'r Frederic ain't here this week. You ain't had no time to talk to him at all, an' you sich old friends, too. Don't ye tink he am a mighty fine young gennelman? Don't ye like him, Miss Aldeane?"

"Oh! yes, pretty well! I wonder why Zettie doesn't come?"

"Oh! bekase ob de ole Eboe blood in her! I tell ye what I tink, missie, it am my 'pinion that dere's some mighty fine folks at de North. Now you jes look at Miss Idy, she's as good as de day is long, an' as purty as de moon a shinin' in de hollors ob de piny woods, so kind o' soft an' gentle like. Well! well! you should ha' seen her when mars'r brought her home. She was jes about de same age dat Miss Nory am now, an' as frolicsome an' innocent as a lamb. When she seen us a standin' by the gate a-starin' at her, she blushed like a scared chile, an' said to mars'r: 'Oh! John, do come away!' but he took her hand an' looked so proud at her, an' whispered somethin' an' she blushed an' smiled ag'in, an' he took Miss Nory out ob my arms, she was a wee thing, and I had dressed her all up in white, so that she looked like a little angel, and gave her to Miss Idy, sayin', 'This is my child.' Miss Idy didn't say any thin', but we all saw by de blessed look that came into her eyes, and de tears dat filled 'em as she kissed the little darlin', that she would be a mother to her, and, God bress her, she has been. By dis time all ob us had crowded 'round 'em, to welcome 'em home. Mars'r told Miss Idy our names, an' she spoke to us, so good dat we lobed her from dat moment. Ah! dem was happy days, de time when Miss Idy fust come!" and Aunt Roxy shook her head slowly, while her thoughts wandered far back into the past.

"Yes, Miss Ida is a good mistress to you," remarked Aldeane.

"Dat's de trufe! an' Mars'r Frederic, bress his heart, is jes' like her, if he ain't her own bruder. Yes, miss, Zettie will soon be a comin' along, don't you fret none about her! Well! as I was a gwine ter say, last winter is three years ago, sence he fust came here; dere had been de greatest time made about his comin', an' when

we seed him, we was all mighty disappointed. Ye know he wasn't sich a drefful handsome boy, not nigh's good lookin' as he is now, and ye see we'd thought as how all Miss Idy's kin must be purty. I was mighty riled 'bout it, for lor', I'd done nothin' for weeks but talk, talk, talk, 'bout de beauty of dat young gennelman. May de Lor' forgi'e me for de fibs I tole Sal, who was cook at de Blakeses. I'd said ag'in an' ag'in, dat none ob her white folkses could hold a can'le to him, an' bress your heart, ebery one ob 'em, 'cept Mass'r Richard, was a heap better lookin'. I jes' was right mad wi' him, I was, for a foolin' us so much. But twarn't no use a stayin' mad 'bout it, besides 'twarn't possible. When Mars'r Fred fust come he was mighty still an' solemn like, bein' a stranger, ye know, but he soon got ober dat, an' long afore he went away he was a cuttin' up eberywhere; out a possum-huntin' wid Mars'r John an' de darkies, an' trackin' rabbits, when we had a snow, an' doin' ebery tink else, that was wild or funny. Sometimes he would come in here an' set all us ole women a larfin', an' den he'd go away larfin' hisself de loudest ob all. Oh! I tell you dem was de times, dem was!" and again the sway-ing of Aunt Roxy's head denoted that reverie was leading her back to past scenes.

"It seems to me they are a long time getting the peaches. I should think you would not dry many at this rate."

"Neder I do, honey! an' dats jes' what Mars'r Frederic said jes' before he went away. Says he, 'Aunt Roxy, why don't ye keep dose youngsters to work, dey're playin' all de time, an' ye can't get any ting done!'

"An' I told him I couldn't do it, an' I 'lowed as how eberybody must play some time, an' work some time."

"'That's so,' he said, 'black an' white too, in dere turn, an' oh! Aunt Roxy, don't ye tink Miss Guthrie works mighty hard?'

"'No, sah,' says I, 'de chillun worries her mighty sometimes, I s'pose. But lor, Mars'r Fred, teachin' ain't hard work, leastways she's used to't I 'speat.'

"'No,' he said, kinder earnest-like,—'no, Aunt Roxy, it isn't easy work, an' when I knew Miss Aldeane, years ago, she was jes' as much ob a lady as Leonore is now.'

"Well, Miss Aldeane, I was sot right back when I heard him say that, for though I always had thought you was mighty smart and clever, I'd no idee you was quality. So, I says, 'Now, Mars'r Frederic, you don't say so.'

"'Yes, I do say so, Aunt Roxy,' he said, 'an' mean it, too. I had no idee ob eber findin' her here. Don't you tink she needs a holiday?'

"'Yes, Mars'r Frederic, I do,' says I, 'an' I believe Miss Idy would a-given her one, if she'd noticed how missuble she's looked for a week or more,' for, indeed, Miss Guthrie, you habn't looked like yourself.

"'Well, auntie,' says he, 'we musn't let Miss Aldeane get sick over her task, and as a particualar favor to me do all you can for her in ebery way, while she stays here.' Dem was his bery words, an' den he walks slow an' thoughtful-like away from de kitchin, wid his head a hangin' down, an' a bitin' his fingers, as if he was tinkin' mighty hard.

"Dat ebenin', as I was a-sittin' under de big mimosa, at de end ob de porch, I seen Miss Idy an' Mars'r Fred, an' de chillun all a sittin' dere. Purty soon he took Miss Jessie on his knee an' axed her if she didn't want a holiday? O' course she said Yes, she did, mighty bad, an' Frank called out that he wanted to go shootin', an' Eddie muttered sometin' 'bout wishin' dere warn't no books, an' wantin' to get shet ob 'em for awhile any how. Mars'r Fred, he larfed, an' said to Jessie, 'You go ober to yer ma, an' ax her in your prettiest way, to let you hab a holiday.' So de dear little critter did so, an' Miss Idy said, 'Oh, Fred, you are a spilin' dese chillun!' an' gave

her a kiss, an' said, 'yes, darlin', you can all have a holiday next week.

"'Leonore must have a rest too,' he said. Miss Idylarfed, an' said, 'Yes.'

"'Dere, now,' said Mars'r Frederic, 'you is all dissolved from study next week, run now as fast as you kin and tell Miss Aldeane.'

"De way dey went wasn't slow. So now you see, Miss Aldeane, 'twas all along of Mars'r Frederic dat ye got dis holiday, an' I seen his face by de moonlight when he got it for ye, an' he was smilin' so kinder pleased, ye don't know. Oh! I tell you, Mars'r Frederic am a genelman, an' a good one too."

"It certainly was very kind of him," said Aldeane, her heart swelling at this unexpected kindness. She wondered at his motive for evincing such interest in her welfare to others, while to her he seldom even spoke. These thoughts perplexed her, while Aunt Roxy, garrulously repeated her opinion of "Mars'r Frederic," and of Northern people in general. She did not perceive that she was not listened to, and was rather surprised when she heard Aldeane leave the kitchen, bidding her send Zettie to her when she came in.

"Well, I 'clar for't," observed the cook, shaking her gayly-turbaned head eagerly, "I do b'lieve Miss Aldeane's sick or somethin', I never seed a lady act so queer in all my days afore. Lor', lor,'" she added, with a thoughtful frown, "dat ar face ob hers do seem like a dream to me, like one ob dem dreams dat comes in de mornin' when a body's thinkin' ob gettin' up; one ob dem dreams dat keeps in a body's head all de day."

CHAPTER XIII.

A TRUCE PROCLAIMED.

IN a few days there was a marked change in Aldeane's appearance, caused, she said, to all that commented thereon, by freedom from teaching, and, as she told herself, by the absence of Mr. Morgan. Perhaps the communication of Aunt Roxy was not without its effect, at least, she owned to herself, that it had softened her feelings toward her old acquaintance, but not so much so but that she still felt his absence a relief, when one day, at the end of her week's holiday, she set out on foot for Loring, preferring to accomplish the journey afoot, at the risk of some fatigue, rather than any of the children should accompany her, as they would surely wish to do, if she went in the carriage. Nearly the whole way, the road lay through thick woods; it was shady and cool, and the distance was soon accomplished. She entered the post-office, mailed her letters, and received one from Belle. As she turned to leave, she perceived that the evening stage had arrived. Casting a careless glance toward it, to her great surprise, she saw Mr. Morgan alight. She supposed, that Colonel Arendell would follow, but she looked in vain. Mr. Morgan was alone. At sight of him, all her misgivings returned with double force. She again entered the office, hoping he had not noticed her. She was disappointed; he had seen her, and entering, accosted her with a formal bow and an inquiry after her health and that of the family, adding:

"You came in, in the carriage, I suppose?"

"No, sir; I walked in," she replied.

"Did you? How very foolish, such a warm day too!" he returned, a vexed yet solicitous expression passing over his face.

"I am sorry, sir! If you had written, a conveyance would have been in waiting for you," she answered.

"I know that! The fact is it was so dull at Raleigh that I made up my mind to leave Arendell there and come home; and now I find," he added ruefully, "that I have to walk there. I suppose you will allow me to accompany you?"

"I believe there is but one road to Arendell, sir," she said coldly.

"Ah! I suppose that means, that you will submit to it as a necessity, or, that you have no objection if I will wait for you. How long will my patience be tried? It will endure a long time."

"I was about to leave, when you arrived."

"If that is to signify that you are ready," said he, "let us be going. It is five o'clock now; they will be expecting you home soon."

They sauntered slowly down the street and turned into the road, neither uttering a word. Just as Aldeane was becoming weary of the protracted silence, Mr. Morgan said:

"You have a letter there, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"Why don't you read it?"

"I don't suppose it is of much consequence. I see it is from Belle; and of course I would not read it in your company, without your permission."

"You have it," he replied, a sarcastic expression distorting his features. "You must suffer martyrdom, in being so long deprived of the continuation of the last edition from Boston."

"I presume, I am not half so anxious to know the

news, as you are yourself!" she thought, as without further hesitation she broke the seal, and was soon engaged in perusing the many pages of the letter. They were soon finished, carefully refolded, and returned to the envelope. For some time they continued to walk on in silence. Mr. Morgan's brow darkening at every step, and Aldeane's face became still more deeply enshrouded in the veil of thought. Some distance was thus traversed. "Well!" thought Aldeane, "I can keep silent as long as you, sir. I wonder how long that will be?"

The question was presently answered by Mr. Morgan's exclaiming: "Why do you not speak, Miss Guthrie?"

Aldeane thought she might have retorted with the same query, but she said, "I was waiting for you to speak first, besides, I did not know what to say!"

"For the first time in your life then, I guess! I remember, you used to be very talkative years ago. But tell me the news, if there is any! What does Belle write?"

"Well! for one thing, she expressed astonishment at your being Mrs. Arendell's brother, and that you should be visiting here. Then, she gives a description of her trip, during which, she met Miss Greyson, who seemed to be in better health than usual."

"Any thing else?"

"Nothing particular, sir. She said that Arthur and Chester Halcombe would commence practicing this fall, and that Annie said you were going to, but that she doubted it."

"No wonder! I have been idle so long, but I am going to make up for lost time, and cure every sick man, woman, or child, in Boston and for ten miles around, this next winter. Is there nothing else?"

"Merely a rumor that Mr. Nevins is about to be married."

"Ah! and how would that affect you, Miss Guthrie?"

"It would produce no effect, sir! Still I scarcely believe it. But at any rate, Mr. Nevins and myself are as little interested in each other, as if we had never been acquainted."

"Ah! that is strange; your step-father too! What has caused this rupture?"

"Our bonds of affection were never very strong; and by a rude blow they were severed. 'Tis the old tale of oppression and injustice! Nothing more."

"Nevertheless, Miss Guthrie, it is a new edition. If I am not intruding on strictly family secrets, you would oblige me very much by giving it."

"I will do so certainly, if you wish it; but remember, if I weary you with a long story, that you brought the infliction upon yourself."

She then narrated as briefly, as quietly, and calmly as was possible, the event of her mother's death, and those following it.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan, as she concluded. "It seems almost impossible that such men can exist! You are agitated by this narration! I do not wonder at it. Oh! what darkness must have hung over those dread days! How you must have suffered! May the vengeance of God speedily overtake the vile oppressor. I know that it eventually will! Ah! Miss Guthrie, this partly explains your conduct toward me!"

"I believe, sir," returned Aldeane, haughtily, "that my conduct has befitted my station. At least, I have endeavored to make it do so!"

"Ah! Miss Guthrie, can you never forget that you are my sister's governess, as I continually do? And—"

"As you never do, sir!" she interrupted, passionately, her cheeks crimsoning with excitement. "Do you think that I am a block of sculptured marble, passionless and dead, that I can not see how in every action you exhibit the opinion you entertain of me? I do not think one

thought of the grief which you know oppresses me ever troubles you. Your desire for a story has been gratified; do not urge me to speak further!"

"I will not, Miss Guthrie," returned Mr. Morgan, calmly. "You are mistaken in me. I think of you often, and with sorrow. I can not but compare the mirthful, gentle girl I left little more than two years ago, with the passionate creature that walks by my side so fiercely now. What though sorrow has come upon you! what though injustice has despoiled you! should you doubt old friends, who, with kind hearts and hands, would greet you? This shows not the trusting heart of woman. Save in person, I can not recognize the Aldeane Guthrie of years ago; even that is sadly changed. The forehead, once so white and smooth, is clouded, the eyes are ireful, the lips scornful, and wearing alone the old look of determination, which was always too strongly marked; no smiles linger upon them now. Your mourning garb seems even to enshroud your spirit; the sunshine of God never seems to fall upon it. Ah! Miss Guthrie, this is wrong!"

"Do not reprove me, Mr. Morgan!" murmured Aldeane, her lips quivering nervously.

"Even my friendship," he continued, bitterly, "you have doubted and cast away. When I again proffered it, it was rejected with disdain. My interest in you fails not; yet of what avail is it? To you it is worthless because it comes from an old source."

"Ah! Mr. Morgan, you do not understand my feelings!"

"Yes, Miss Guthrie, I do!" he answered, stopping suddenly beneath a large oak-tree, for they were near Arendell House. "Rest a moment, and I will tell you what they are. Love of approval; shame of your position in life; and pride—that false pride that lives in the hearts of all, and predominates over the good feelings of many. I have spoken truly, Aldeane! and how unworthy are

those feelings of the brain—I will not say of the heart, for that still is good—that contains them.”

Aldeane felt that his words were true. She wept vehemently in sorrow and shame. Mr. Morgan looked upon her with an expression at once mournful and stern; yet seemingly pleased at this outburst of feeling.

“Calm yourself, Miss Guthrie,” he said at length, “and tell me, have I not spoken truly? I think, even now, I see the Aldeane of old appearing. The foul spirit—what else can I call it?—which has so long possessed you is exorcised. Have I spoken truly?”

“Yes; oh yès!” came in broken murmurs.

“Let us walk on, Miss Guthrie; there is a branch a short distance from here. You look faint; some water will refresh you. Lean upon me!”

Aldeane heeded him not, but hurried onward. When she reached the water, she knelt down, and, with hysterical sobs, leaned over the bank and bathed her heated face; the cold water refreshed her. Glancing up, she saw Mr. Morgan standing at her side, his eyes filled with tenderness, looking sorrowfully upon her. “You are calmer—better?” he said.

“Oh, yes!” she returned, rising. “I have been foolish and very wrong! I have, indeed, doubted the friendship of all; but it is my nature! What can I do?”

“Atone for your past coldness by accepting me for a friend now, Aldeane,” he answered. “Will you do it?”

“Gladly!” she replied, blushing, and smiling sweetly. “I feel that you are my friend, for you have restored me to myself. I know now that the change for which I have accused you, has been in myself—in the bitterness and selfishness of my heart. I shall never doubt you again.”

“Thank you! thank you!” he said. “But, Aldeane, you shall not slander yourself! I should not be a true

friend to allow that. Come, it is time to pursue our way. The sun is casting his last rays over us."

She walked beside him silently, with a strange happiness at her heart, though her brain was busy with a thousand painful thoughts. They were soon at the bend of the road, on turning which they would be in sight of Arendell House.

"Miss Aldeane," said Mr. Morgan smiling, "you once refused to shake hands with me. Will you do so now, and thereby ratify your contract of making me your friend?"

"Certainly, Mr. Morgan!" and Aldeane gladly extended her hand, which he clasped warmly, saying; "I know sister Ida was shocked at my neglect of the ceremony the other day, but you know—" his brow darkening, "that it is bad for the hand to go where the heart is not! Hillo! Frank!" as they turned the corner and saw that young gentleman with an admiring crowd of juveniles, both white and black around him, preparing to fire at a dead crow, which had been set up as a target. Frank deliberately discharged his piece, then turned toward them, while Jessie and Eddie ran to meet them, the former exclaiming:—

"Oh! here's Miss Aldeane and Uncle Fred! Why! how d'ye do, uncle?"

"Oh, right smart! my little Carolinian, and how do you come on?" he replied, laughing, as he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"What did you come home so soon for?" said Eddie.

Frank who had approached them, demanded eagerly, "Where is pa? He promised to bring me a bran new rifle! Hasn't he come?"

"The fact is," returned Mr. Morgan gravely, yet scarcely able to repress a smile at their *naïve* greetings, "he couldn't get a rifle to suit in Raleigh, so he has gone farther north for one."

"I don't believe it!" said Frank, decidedly, marching up the steps of the piazza, which they had now reached, while Jessie ran into the house, calling loudly: "Ma! ma! Uncle Fred has come home, and he says papa has gone farther north!"

"What is that?" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell, appearing. "Why! Fred, how are you? How did you come home? John isn't sick? Is he?"

"One question at a time!" replied Mr. Morgan, embracing her. "Your last shall be answered first. John is well. I left him at Raleigh. It was so dull there, that I knew I should enjoy myself better here. I came as far as Loring in the stage, there I met Miss Guthrie, and I came home with her."

Wishing to escape observation, Aldeane entered the house. In the hall she encountered Leonore, who glanced at her inquiringly. "Mr. Morgan has come," she said, and passed on. Leonore ran out to the piazza.

After the first greetings were over, she said: "What is the matter with Aldeane? I thought I saw traces of tears upon her face."

"Oh! she is very lachrymose!" replied Mr. Morgan. "There may have been some bad news in her letter."

"She has changed greatly of late!" said Mrs. Arendell. "Frederic, you don't treat her well. You did not even shake hands with her when you left."

"I was in a hurry, *ma sœur*! that must be my apology. Excuse me I must go, and rid myself of some of this dust. What awful roads you do have here, Ida!" He sprang lightly up the stairs. Aldeane, in her own room, happier far than usual, heard his quick step; and felt that his presence filled the void which she had felt in the house, during his absence.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALDEANE LEARNS A SECRET.

A FEW plain words fearlessly spoken, caused a great change in Aldeane's feelings and actions. She was provokingly conscious that the former had been mawkishly sentimental, and childish, and the latter scarcely less so. This perhaps for a few days induced her to maintain much of her former reserve, but much to the gratification of Mrs. Arendell and Leonore, a growing friendship between Mr. Morgan and the governess soon became evident, and upon Colonel Arendell's return from Raleigh with the new rifle Frank had coveted, and numerous gifts for the rest of the family, he declared that home had never been so delightful, for mirth and gladness truly filled the house.

The hours of evening, which had formerly been spent by Aldeane in moodiness and gloom, in the solitude of her own chamber, were now passed in the parlor with the cheerful family. She sang with Mr. Morgan the old songs that had been his favorites in by-gone years. There was a serene happiness at her heart in those moments; her pride and self-esteem were gratified; she was considered an equal, and treated as such, and often as a loved and near friend. This, to Aldeane, was happiness. No longer was Mr. Morgan mute or cold toward her; he seemed, indeed, to find his greatest pleasure in calling forth the rare powers of her mind. She had read much and carefully, and had garnered a store of knowledge unusually large for one of her years. His seemed to be the

hand that could most easily unroll the cerements of diffidence that enshrouded them, and bring her varied learning and talents forth. She seemed to live in a brighter world. She had known little care or sorrow during her residence at the South, but her happiness had been passive and changeless; now it was varying, yet intense. Hitherto she had dwelt in the moon-lit tranquillity of night; now she walked in the busy avenues of life, over which the king of day threw his brilliance.

This was the tenor of her thoughts one bright afternoon, as she left the house and set forth to visit a sick woman that dwelt in a little cabin on the estate. "Yes!" she soliloquized, "Frederic Morgan is the same genial, pure-hearted gentleman as of old, but I was so much changed! and I fear I still am. I know I am proud, but that is my nature. It existed always; circumstances have lately called it forth. I wonder when Mr. Morgan intends to return to the North? Oh! it will be so lonely here without him!"

"Ah! Miss Aldeane, where are you going to?" ejaculated a voice behind her.

Turning suddenly, she saw the subject of her thoughts standing before her, his face flushed with exercise, his hat in one hand, while with the other he tossed back his damp hair from his temples. She blushed deeply, almost fearing that he knew of what she had been thinking, and he repeated his question before she found voice to answer, "To Granny Bray's."

"Ah! to Granny Bray's, are you? You seem to remember the injunction:—

'Be a nurse to the sick; to the erring a guide;
Be a friend to the poor; let this be thy pride.
Then shall thy pathway through life be so bright,
That angels shall see it, and smile with delight.'

If this be true, and if you have any pity for the most mis-

erable specimen of humanity that you ever beheld, let me go with you."

"Certainly! But what is the matter with you, sir?"

"The matter, did you say?" he queried ruefully. "Well! I'll forgive the question! Perhaps you have not noticed the doings at the house lately?"

"All seems to go on about as usual, I think."

"Now, Miss Aldeane! This afternoon, feeling decidedly gracious and communicative, I entered the sitting-room. What was my annoyance to find Ida overcome with the heat, or laziness, which is about the same thing, reclining on the sofa, fast asleep, and Jessie upon the floor in the same state. I heard Leonore playing monotonously upon the piano in the parlor. I went in, hoping to find her ready to desist, but she only played on all the faster, and exclaimed, 'Oh! Uncle Fred, don't interrupt me, I must practice!' So I went out to find Arendell or the boys, but they were invisible. I looked around for you, but you were nowhere to be seen. I asked Jule where you were. 'She's gone up de mill road, sah; bin gone 'bout ten minutes!' I ran down the walk, jumped over the fence, to save time, in my haste nearly fell through a hole in the bridge, and have nearly expended all my breath in running up hill and shouting to you to stop."

"Yours is a sad case!" she replied, laughingly. "I fear you are becoming restless: North Carolina has no charms for you."

"It contains one too great—too great," he returned, vehemently; then added, slowly, while his eyes were fixed upon the sands at his feet. "What do you think of it? Would you not like to return to Boston?"

"Yes! yes, indeed!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Aldeane, then—" He paused suddenly, an expression of pain passing over his face, as he turned aside to let her enter the cottage, which they had now reached.

An old woman lay upon the bed, another was busying herself about the room, both welcomed Aldeane heartily. She spoke to the sick woman, and when Mr. Morgan, constituting himself her physician, sat down beside her, she turned to address the other. There was a loom in the room, and the woman was standing before it, striving to reduce to order a mass of complicated threads. Aldeane watched her for some time, and then said,

“What are you doing, Sarah?”

“Putting in a piece, Miss Aldeane. It’s for Miss Arendell. Somehow her yarn always does work mighty ill; ’tain’t dyed well, neither.”

“What is the matter with it, Sarah?”

“Laws a massy, Miss Aldeane, I can’t tell exactly, only I know, ’twon’t wear well. Now, your folks should dye yarn like I do; I’ve just made John a new suit of clothes, and if you was to meet him in the road, you would take him for a gentleman.”

“Indeed, what did you dye with, Sarah?”

“Well, Miss Aldeane, I’ll give you the recipe. I wanted to dye this yarn, so I called to Uncle Sandy—that’s our old black man, you know—and says I to him, ‘Uncle Sandy, I want you to go into the woods and get me some bark to dye with.’

“‘What kind of barks, missus?’ says he.

“‘Why, you know what kind of barks, Uncle Sandy.’

“‘Why, no I don’t, missus.’

“‘Why, Uncle Sandy, yes you do!’

“‘I declar’, missus, I don’t.’

“‘Now,’ says I, ‘Uncle Sandy, don’t you tell me that again; you go and get me the same kind of bark your own clothes is dyed with.’

“So he went and got me the barks, and I dipped the yarn, and wove the cloth, and made John a suit of clothes, and I do declar’, if you was to meet him in the road, you’d take him for a gentleman.”

"Is that all you did, Sarah?" asked Aldeane, scarcely able to repress a smile.

"That's all, miss, and I'll be bound them colors will last after every stitch of the cloth is worn out."

"Are you ready to go?" asked Mr. Morgan, in a low voice, and with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

"I shall be in a few moments." She spoke a few words to the sick woman, bade her and Sarah farewell, and left the cottage, followed by Mr. Morgan.

"I hope you know how to dye yarn," he said, as soon as they were out of sight of the cottage, laughing heartily. "I shall have to repeat that recipe for Ida's edification."

Aldeane laughed, and then said gravely, "I fear old granny will soon die!"

"Yes," returned Mr. Morgan, "she is sinking fast, overcome with the infirmities of old age. But perhaps the grave will be to her the entrance into a glorious life."

"I believe so, indeed," returned Aldeane: and then they talked of death as something very dreadful, and very near at hand, as young people sometimes do, even when it seems utterly impossible that it should come to them, and this led them to speak of other partings—earthly partings;—and of the changes which often prevented the meeting of friends who had separated under even most promising circumstances; and Aldeane remembering his parting from his father, and attributing the increasing sadness of his tone to that, sympathized with him deeply, until all feeling for others was swept away by a new feeling, as he said: "And speaking of partings, Miss Guthrie, do you know that I shall leave for Boston in a few days?"

She felt that she could not speak, that her voice would utterly fail her, yet fearing to attract his attention by silence, she faintly murmured: "Shall you, indeed!"

He looked at her, oh, so strangely,—that her heart fluttered wildly even while she dared not hope his words

would be other than they were. "Yes, I am tired of this place; tired, tired." Suddenly adding, passionately: "God help me, I must go!"

"And you feel sorry to leave us?" she asked, scarce knowing what she said.

"Oh, Aldeane! Aldeane! this is torture," he exclaimed, and then he compressed his lips as if in terror at the unguarded utterance.

She glanced at him in trembling surprise, and was shocked to see how pale he was; he trembled too from head to foot, and seemed to be endeavoring to compose himself, by bracing his muscles, clinching his teeth, and biting his shapely nails back to the very quick.

"Oh! would to God that he suffered this for me, for I love him! I love him!" was the voiceless cry of her heart. "But oh! this agony is not for me! It must be Leonore he loves, and why not? She is good and beautiful; no real relationship exists between them. Oh! why has this come upon me? for I love him—I love him!"

She hurried on impetuously, while Mr. Morgan mechanically kept pace with her. Her brain seemed on fire and her heart throbbed wildly. They reached the bridge; overcome by her emotions she could proceed no farther, but leaned against the railing for support. Mr. Morgan, glancing at her, saw the weary motion and burning cheek; his lips parted as if to speak, he turned toward her, but with a deep sigh he checked the movement and hurried away.

Despair laid his hand upon Aldeane's heart; she did not faint or cry; but stood there to think, and to drive back to her heart's deepest recesses the love that she could not eradicate.

Not long did she remain there. When Mr. Morgan had disappeared she went eagerly, wildly, in the direction of the house. Upon reaching it, she ran quickly u

the stairs to her own room. In the upper hall she met Leonore, who asked, "How is Granny?"

"Worse," she replied, passing the inquirer with a feeling of repugnance, almost deepening into hatred in her heart. Leonore turned in surprise at the short answer; but Aldeane had disappeared, and the closing of her door loudly, and the harsh grating of the key in the lock, denoted that she did not wish to be disturbed. Leonore passed on wondering what had happened. She remembered the flushed cheeks and burning eyes. "It must be something of great importance," she thought, but could not imagine what.

Aldeane pacing her apartment rapidly, felt in her inmost soul what despairing love was. "Oh! that I could die now! Oh! that I should be passed by for Leonore—Leonore, who loves him not." Soon her frame became exhausted with this passionate energy of thought and action. Burning thoughts passed through her mind, searing their impress upon her heart. Tearless she stood at her window, and saw Mr. Morgan and Leonore, arm-in-arm, pass beneath; with a cry of anguish she threw herself upon the bed to sob tearlessly. Her mind and heart seemed striving to break their bonds. She prayed to die e'er, by any untoward action, she betrayed this agonizing love, that racked her being, and the jealousy that was maddening her. With the gray shadows of evening came calmer thoughts, and better. Kneeling, she prayed for strength and consolation, as she had never petitioned before. She arose comforted, and with relief-giving tears coursing over her cheeks. She was unable to appear at the tea-table, but later in the evening entered the parlor. All seemed much concerned at her pallor and evident suffering. Mrs. Arendell mentioned many remedies for severe headache, under which they supposed she suffered; but Mr. Morgan, Aldeane thought, greeted her with a peculiar expression

of interest and sympathy. "Has he guessed my secret?" asked her heart, throbbing wildly. The reply came quickly, "No; but he has discovered that he is not loved by Leonore!"

She excused herself at an early hour. As she left the room, she heard Mrs. Arendell say, "Fred, Miss Guthrie's health has been miserable of late. I believe, I shall have to send her North with you! Perhaps that would cure her."

With her foot upon the stairs, Aldeane listened for his answer, but it came not, and with a sigh she passed on. She did not see the spasm that contorted his features, nor guess the agony that made his heart stand still at the jesting words.

The next morning at the breakfast-table, Mr. Morgan announced his intention of returning to Boston on the morrow, giving as his reasons, that his mother and Annie Greyson having returned to Morganvale, they would consider him neglectful, if he longer absented himself; and also, that it was positively time that he should commence the practice of his profession. In these opinions all concurred, and an early day was set for his departure. Before any one could notice the agitation, that it was impossible for Aldeane to conceal, she arose from the table, reminded Leonore that it was time for her music lesson, and left the room. It was some time before she was joined by her pupil, and in the interval, she had gained strength to quell the angry and jealous thoughts with which she regarded her, and gave her instructions more silently, but as amiably as usual.

She thought she perceived, what was doubtless true, that the thought she held concerning Mr. Morgan and Leonore, had presented itself to other minds, and to a suspicion of its truth, she attributed Mrs. Arendell's evident pleasure, that her brother's visit was not to be prolonged, and the colonel, who was not apt to conceal

what was passing in his mind, more than once uttered laughing objections to the long walks which the twain took together, saying they would fancy themselves cousins, or perhaps mere strangers by and by. Morgan was too agreeable by half, to be the uncle of a pretty young lady.

All this in jest to Mrs. Arendell and Aldeane, yet the latter at least fancied there was a deep vein of earnestness in what he said, and thought it indeed so long and constantly, that her jealousy gave place to pity, and had it been possible, she would gladly have destroyed the bond of connection, if not relationship, which she supposed alone prevented Frederic Morgan from asking the hand of Leonore in marriage.

CHAPTER XV.

A SECOND SECRET TOLD.

DURING this time, Aldeane was still occasionally pursued by the distasteful attentions of the ex-overseer, who, although he seldom adverted to any knowledge he might have of her antecedents, did not fail upon every opportunity to represent the advantages she would gain by an alliance with him.

He seldom spoke to her in the house, for it was not often that an opportunity to do so presented itself, but he apparently dogged her footsteps when abroad, and she almost feared to enter a secluded place, lest his hated face should peer in upon her, and his sinister eyes bring distrust and terror to her soul.

Having one afternoon gone up the river to search for wild flowers, she met her persecutor almost upon the very spot upon which had occurred their first memorable interview. Again he spoke to her of love, when indignantly refusing to answer him, she turned in the direction of the house, and walked hurriedly away, commanding him not to follow. A command, which the direction she had taken, left him no alternative but to obey.

Oh, how hateful this pursuit was to her! When she was out of sight and hearing of her tormentor, she burst into tears, and sobbed aloud that "this should be stopped, she would call Colonel Arendell to her aid, as soon as Mr. Morgan was gone."

There was a rustling in the bushes, they parted, and

the person she had last named, gun in hand, and with a string of birds at his belt, stood before her.

"Pardon me, Aldeane," he said in great agitation, before she could recover from the surprise and dismay into which his unexpected presence had thrown her. "Pardon me, Aldeane, I was just now the unwilling spectator of a scene which seemed to distress you greatly. Aldeane, my soul recoils from the indignity that was offered you—you, my love, my own."

His feelings had apparently mastered his discretion, for with but one glance at the joy which revealed itself in her face, he turned from her, and hid his face in his hands.

Aldeane was motionless from very joy. He loved her—not Leonore, but her very self. She looked at him with burning blushes, and unconsciously his name fell from her lips.

He turned to her then, with a passion she could not mistake. Yes, he loved her. But these were not the words he said. No, he threw himself at her feet, praying her forgiveness, wildly telling her that she had won his heart, while his hand was promised to another.

She had not told him that she loved him. Even in the agony his words brought her she remembered that, and yet, he knew it, and believing that, all her pride fled, and she leaned against a tree and wept bitterly.

In an instant he stood beside her. "Aldeane," he cried, "whom I have so unhappily deceived, whom I brought forth from your haughty reserve, out of mere idleness, to such a bitter end as this, believe me, until now I have not known my own heart, else, God knows, I would not so bitterly have wounded yours. And yet," he added, eagerly, "perhaps you have guessed—perhaps you know I am engaged to marry Annie Greyson."

"Annie Greyson! Annie Greyson!" she repeated, vacantly. "Your pretty cousin."

"Yes, my pretty cousin," he echoed bitterly. "Can you not guess, Aldeane, how it was brought about—you know I never loved her—but my father did. He had loved her mother, they say, long before he married mine. She was his cousin, so you see his ward Annie, is but a distant relation to me. Before I left for Europe he disclosed to me a notable plan for enriching his pretty darling. I was to marry her. I jestingly told him I would think of it, and upon the same day, I remember, appropriated your portrait which Miss Ashton showed me. I did not mean then, Aldeane, to be false either to you or Annie. I did not even know then, that it was you I loved, though my God, with what bitterness I know it now."

Aldeane was by this time listening to him tearlessly, and with all her powers of attention concentrated upon the simple tale he told.

"I had scarcely reached England," he continued, "when news of my father's death reached me, together with a letter which he directed to be sent to me, in case of such an event suddenly taking place. Therein he instructed me to remain in Europe the time he had appointed, and begged me to enter at once into an engagement of marriage with Annie Greyson, and to fulfill the same immediately upon my return to America."

"I understand," said Aldeane, in a low voice, pressing her hand upon her heart. "You were an obedient son."

"I loved my father," said Mr. Morgan, as if she had not spoken. "I did not trouble myself to search my heart, and failed to read its secrets at a single glance. 'Your cousin will make an estimable wife,' said my confidant, George Raymond. I suggested that he loved her himself, but he replied, in his old way, that he should never marry. Therefore I wrote, offering my hand, and heart too, I think, to my cousin, and was accepted."

"Tell me no more," said Aldeane, turning toward him

suddenly, with pale and resolute face. "You have said too much already; you are to marry your cousin."

"No!" he exclaimed, passionately, "she loves me no more than I do her. Aldeane, I love you, madly. Be my wife—the wife of a poor man; for I will give up all my property to Annie Greyson, and entreat her to release me."

A sudden hope darted into Aldeane's heart. This contemplated marriage, this union of strangers, might be as obnoxious to Annie Greyson as to Frederic Morgan himself. Was it not right that he should offer her her freedom; and, upon such generous terms, would she not accept it? And so, when he repeated, again and again, "Would you marry me—a poor man?" she sank into his arms and whispered, "Yes."

But in an instant she remembered that he was not free, and tore herself from his embrace, and entreated him to remember it also, to be himself generous and honorable, that she might have strength to act generously and honorably also.

And then, as he poured forth a thousand assurances that Annie did not love him, that she would gladly release him, there came upon her a conviction that she would not do so; that the pretty, frivolous doll, would hold him to his engagement; that she would, at all hazards, gain the height of her ambition by becoming the mistress of Morganvale, as the wife of its possessor.

This Aldeane said to him, not ungenerously, but imputing to Annie Greyson such motives as might rule even a noble-hearted woman; and while she did not combat his intention of asking his release from his engagement, for both heart and mind, as much for Annie Greyson's sake as for their own, approved of that, she insisted her name should not be mentioned, and that it should not be even implied that he was loved by another; that Annie Greyson's generosity should be asked for himself alone;

and not even for himself if it should appear that she herself loved him.

"No, I will tell her the truth," replied Frederic Morgan, again and again. "I will give her my wealth, and toil for you, my darling. You will not be afraid?"

"Afraid! with him?" She did not speak, but her eyes revealed to him the inquiry of her heart, and its confident reply. But when she spoke, it was only to softly say farewell, and that she had no hope, "For you, I know, will do as I have asked—no more."

"Aldeane," he exclaimed, suddenly, with a despair which revealed to her that his opinions were like hers. "Aldeane, why will you not suffer me to break my foolish vow? She does not love me, and I shall die without you!"

She looked at him a moment, as he clasped her hands to his breast and uttered these wild entreaties: "I love you now," she said. "I should not tell you so, but I do. I love you,—no, do not touch me—but I can not purchase happiness at the price of hers or of your dishonor."

He pressed his hands over his face, and groaned aloud. "Then there is no hope," he muttered. "Aldeane! Aldeane! I will do as you have said, but mine will be a ruined life."

"And what of mine?" she asked herself, wildly; but to him she only said, "You will not write to me, Frederic, if this is our farewell. You will spare me further grief!"

He caught her in his arms; but she tore herself away, and rushed from the place, fearing to stay, fearing her wayward heart, fearing him.

She hastened to the house, and to her own chamber, the door of which she locked and barred, doubly eager to keep out any chance intruder. She had not taken with her hope; she was quite certain that this love she had

won would be claimed by another; and, throwing herself upon her bed, she wept such tears, and breathed such prayers, as man never sees, or hears, and the omniscient God but seldom, even though to Him all agony is known.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOUBT BECOMES CERTAINTY.

MRS. ARENDELL had invited a few friends to meet Mr. Morgan that evening, it being the last of his stay with them. Although Aldeane had hastened to her room, and passed the last hours of day in grief too deep for tears, she knew that her presence would be expected in the parlor; so, after performing a far more elaborate toilet than usual, she repaired thither, as the company were beginning to arrive. Mr. Morgan was there, receiving the guests with what Aldeane readily saw was an assumed gayety. Mrs. Arendell and Leonore were delighted at his gay sallies and quick repartees, and joined in speaking of his happy disposition and cloudless temperament to her who knew, too well, that all his mirth was feigned. Following his example, with a violent effort, she, too, became unusually merry, replying most graciously to the compliments of Mr. Blake and Mr. Lounsberry, raising in the bosoms of both gentlemen hopes doomed to be most cruelly disappointed. She sang more sweetly, and played more brilliantly than ever before, almost deceiving Mr. Morgan with her well-feigned gayety. They appeared to be the happiest of the throng, imparting mirth and joyousness to all, while their hearts were dying within them. At a late hour, when they had gone to their apartments, this feverish excitement passed, and a night of unrest succeeded. The dawn was welcomed eagerly by both, for though it brought the doom of parting, even that was better than

to be near one, whom 'twas sin, yet impossible, not to love.

After an early breakfast, the family all gathered upon the front porch, to see Mr. Morgan off. His adieus to all were affectionate, and at last he turned to Aldeane, who leant against a pillar, breathless and tearless. She saw that he was very pale, that passionate love beamed in his eyes. He took her nerveless hand in his fevered one, and endeavored to speak, but words came not. Then pressing her closely to his wildly beating heart, with his eyes, full of love and despair, fixed upon hers, he kissed her lips passionately, once—twice—then leaving her half fainting, rushed away, leapt into the carriage, in which Colonel Arendell was waiting; the impatient horses sprang forward, and in a moment they were gone.

Aldeane watched his departure with tearless eyes, and an agonized despairing glance, as if her last earthly joy was being tossed on foaming billows, and borne far away from her sight, to be buried in the fathomless ocean of eternity. As the carriage, with its cherished occupant, sped from her sight, the over-strung tension of her nerves gave way, and with a low moan of pain, she threw herself upon a chair at Leonore's side, who bending over her, exclaimed:—

“Mamma! mamma! Miss Aldeane is fainting! She is very sick!”

Mrs. Arendell had been somewhat surprised at the strange parting between her governess and her brother, though she had not noticed the agonized expression upon the faces of both. She had, however, dismissed the matter with the thought, “’Tis only Fred’s nonsense, and they are such old friends, of course there is nothing in his kissing her. One can never account for half of Fred’s deeds.”

At Leonore’s exclamation she turned, and was much alarmed to see Aldeane apparently very ill.

"What is the matter, Aldeane?" she asked, anxiously.

Uncle Adam was passing. Obeying Mrs. Arendell's directions, he lifted Aldeane as if she were an infant, and carried her to her chamber. Kind hands soon disrobed her, and thoroughly exhausted, she sank upon the downy pillows of her couch. For days the room was darkened, and Zettie, with noiseless feet, waited upon the sufferer. The doctor pronounced her illness to be a low nervous fever, and recommended perfect quiet. His instructions were obeyed, and three weeks afterward, for the first time, she was taken in an easy chair to the window, and looked languidly out upon the scene, which had greatly changed during her illness. Summer had passed. The forests had donned their autumnal garb, and swayed in the cool breezes that herald the approach of winter. Aldeane sighed as she thought of the dreary winter that was stealing the freshness and joy thus early from her life; but she felt that there was still some beauty left, and bearing the soft tints of love, but the more decided one of life's reality. Daily after this she sat at the window learning lessons of contentment; applying the balm of heavenly consolation to her bruised heart. She had heard that Mr. Morgan had reached home, and had made preparations to begin the practice of his profession. She had heard nothing of his proposed marriage, and wondered if it would indeed take place, and when she would be called upon to lay her heart's idol upon the altar of sacrifice. One day feeling unusually strong, and having a strong desire to mingle with the family; she slipped out of her room, in Zettie's absence, and astonished them by appearing at the sitting-room door. Colonel Arendell sprang forward, and with an exclamation of pleased surprise, led her to a seat, at the same time pushing away the children, who would have gathered round her. Mrs. Arendell was very apprehensive that she had done wrong, yet was greatly pleased to

have her once more with them. The children were allowed to kiss her once, then playfully, but decisively turned out of the room by Colonel Arendell, that she might have quietness. Leonore shook up the sofa-cushions, and arranged them invitingly, and overcome by exertion, Aldeane sank gratefully upon them.

"I believe," said Colonel Arendell, offering her a glass of wine, "that we shall have to send you North for a change."

"Oh, no, I shall remain here. I shall soon be well," she answered, quickly.

"Well, as you please, my dear; I am glad you are so contented. I don't believe you have been long reconciled to this life."

"John," interposed Mrs. Arendell, reprovingly, "you know that if Aldeane has rather imprudently ventured down, that she is far from well. We must not let her talk too much; she can listen to us, but not exert herself. Doctor Grey especially forbade that when he was here to-day."

"De mail, Mass'r John," said Jule, entering with some letters in his hand, which he gave to Colonel Arendell; who, glancing at their superscriptions, said, "One for you, Ida."

Mrs. Arendell was soon eagerly perusing its contents; when finished, she passed it to her husband, saying, from Frederic, and picking up her sewing, began the work with a look of preoccupation upon her countenance. She did not notice that Aldeane's eyes were fixed wistfully upon her face, and when, glancing up, she caught the mournful look, she asked:—

"Do you want any thing, Aldeane?"

"No, I thank you," she replied, removing her gaze from Mrs. Arendell to the colonel, who, having finished the letter, leaned back in his chair, as if ready to converse.

"Well—" said Mrs. Arendell.

"I think it is the best thing he can do," returned the colonel.

"So do I. They have been engaged quite long enough; and they are both old enough to marry. I am glad that it is really decided upon at last."

"Oh, ma," exclaimed Leonore, "is Uncle Fred going to be married soon?"

"Probably, in a month or two."

"Well, I am so glad; I shall see a little of the world at last. I have never even been to a party yet."

"And sixteen years old!" ejaculated the colonel, as if horrified. "Only think of it, sixteen years old, and never been to a party. Sixteen——!"

"And a month, pa!" cried Leonore, eagerly.

Her father laughed, saying, "Well, Nora, I promise gayety enough for you this winter."

"Fred says that Annie is a very pretty, pleasant girl," said Mrs. Arendell, musingly. "He told me the evening before he left, that he should be married soon, if Annie would consent. I hadn't a doubt but that she would, and told him so. He seemed quite excited about it. I was a little surprised, as he always seemed so indifferent before."

"Perhaps he was afraid some one else might step in and carry off the prize," observed Colonel Arendell.

"Annie is very accomplished," continued Mrs. Arendell, "though, Fred says, not at all brilliant. I wish she had a little more depth of character. I know she would suit him better. But they say she is amiable; so, no doubt, they will get on together splendidly."

"You will have to practice well, Leonore," said her father, "before you go North. Don't let the Boston belles, or beaux either, think that my little daughter knows nothing."

"I will try not to. But, oh, dear! there will be such a heap of things to do before we can go. Such lots of dresses to get, and——"

"Don't worry yourself," interrupted Mrs. Arendell, laughing at Leonore's anxiety, "a few days' shopping in New York will set us all right. Frederic says Annie intends to ask you to be a bridesmaid—think of that!"

"Oh, that is delightful! so very kind in her, too, when she never saw me in her life. What shall I wear, ma? And pa, you must get me some pearls! Bridesmaids always wear pearls, you know."

"You are never contented without a draft upon my purse," returned her father, laughing; "but you shall have them, little lady. Is there any thing else the bridesmaids always have?"

"Yes, sir, lots of things; but when must we go? when are they to be married?"

"On the twenty-first of November."

A faint moan from Aldeane arrested their attention. They turned, and were frightened to see the blue-veined lids closing languidly over her brown eyes, and her mouth fixed rigidly.

Colonel Arendell, springing forward, dashed some water on her pale face, while Mrs. Arendell exclaimed, "How imprudent! Now, this is a week's relapse."

Her words were true. Aldeane was borne to her chamber, from which she did not again descend until the dreary November days with their chilly rains, were upon them. Then the school-room had again its mistress, and Leonore was relieved from the wearisome task of teaching her young brothers and sister, and turned to the more agreeable one, of preparing for her journey North. Colonel, Mrs. Arendell, and Leonore, alone were going, leaving Aldeane alone with the children. She was glad of the half solitude their absence would give, and looked calmly upon the preparations made for the celebration of that event which would separate her forever from that heart upon whose inmost tablet her image was indelibly graven.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW.

It was upon one evening, when Aldeane Guthrie lay at the worst point of the fever which had attacked her, that many hundred miles distant her fate was considered and decided.

Frederic Morgan had reached his home the day before, where his mother and Annie Greyson were expecting him—the first most anxiously, and the latter with that graceful indifference which was her chief characteristic. Both were somewhat surprised at his excitability, and neither were inclined to like the change which had been apparently wrought in him by his two years of travel. But they naturally attributed his nervousness, and the sudden changes in his mood from silence to almost uproarious mirth, to his return to a home whence had been removed a beloved father, and where a lovely bride awaited him.

For Annie Greyson was undeniably beautiful, as he said to himself as he entered the parlor the second evening after his return home, and saw her sitting near the fire, an almost miniature representative of loveliness and fashion.

He had asked her to meet him there, but as she languidly raised her blue eyes to his face, there was no look of curiosity, or that warmer feeling which should have kindled within them. She did not rise, but, as he stood before her, motioned him to a seat at the opposite side of the grate, and observed that it was very cold for the season.

He did not take the proffered seat, nor immediately answer her; but, leaning against the mantel, looked down upon her.

First, he thought how different would have been his greeting if the plainly-robed form of her he loved were seated before him, instead of this silken-dressed doll, with her ribbons and laces and perfumes. Yet, though she seemed to him then a thousand times more frivolous than ever before, he was not unjust to her; he believed her possessed of the simple vanity of a child, but not for an instant of the ambition of a somewhat unscrupulous woman.

She toyed lightly with a rosebud which she held in her hand, and yawned slightly behind her laced handkerchief as he looked at her, glancing furtively once at a long mirror which reflected her person, and with the thought that blue became her admirably, and that she was looking unusually well, decided that her lover's first words would be a compliment; she started, therefore, when he at last said, gravely:—

"Annie, I have asked you to meet me here, that we may speak seriously together concerning our contemplated marriage."

She blushed very prettily, as she glanced at him for one instant. "Indeed, Frederic," she said, at last, "I had much rather that you should settle all that with your dear mamma;" adding, inaudibly, "I'm sure I shall have enough to do to see to my wardrobe. Yes, I'm quite decided. I will wear white satin instead of *moire antique*."

"Annie," answered Frederic, quite unconscious of these last thoughts, "too much of what has passed between us has been managed by other people."

"Dear uncle was so thoughtful," murmured Annie.

Frederic Morgan bit his lips, and looked at her askance. "Give me your whole mind and attention, Annie, for a

few minutes," he cried, suddenly. "This is no child's play, Annie. Tell me, had I come to you a stranger, poor and friendless, would you have married me?"

She was actually startled—perhaps more by his excited manner than by his words, unexpected though they were—but, after a moment's pause, she answered, with perfect serenity:—

"You know, Fred, I should never have thought of any thing so improper. I'm quite grieved that you should think it possible."

"That being the case," exclaimed Frederic, "you will be quite contented to find yourself mistress of Morganvale without the incumbrance of a husband."

Then she looked at him in perfect and undisguised amazement.

"I'm sure," she stammered, at length, uttering the words which, of all others, he dreaded to hear, "if you think that you would be an incumbrance, you are much mistaken. I am sure you will be an admirable husband, and I will try to please you in every way."

"That I do not doubt," he exclaimed, in great agitation; "but believe me, Annie, it is as much for your sake as mine that I beg you to consider deeply before you fulfill the contract into which you were forced by my father."

"Oh, indeed, Frederic, he behaved in a most gentlemanly manner," returned Annie, in a mildly persuasive tone. "Now, pray don't worry, Fred, and think that I have been forced to marry you by a tyrannical guardian, for I'm sure I always thought you very nice."

It almost maddened him to hear her prattle thus, with much more to the same purpose. How childishly selfish she was. Would she never think that he, perhaps, had been forced into this marriage if she had not.

"Annie," he said, suddenly, "you have honored me by saying that this marriage is not distasteful to you, while

you have, at the same time, given me abundant proof that your affections would receive no shock if it never was solemnized. I, unfortunately, can not be so indifferent."

She looked up at him curiously.

"Annie," he said, in a low voice, "forgive me, Annie, I love another."

He had expected a burst of passionate tears, of cutting reproaches, scorn, hatred, any thing but the charming pout of the red lips as she answered, "I really think that very wrong of you, Frederic. Such a shame as it was in you to deceive a poor girl so!"

"Deceive her!" he cried, passionately. "Indeed, I did not deceive her! It was not in my power to do so. My love was uncontrollable. Even while I was praying for strength to hide it, it burst from my lips, and all my tale of love and despair was told."

"Dear me, that was so unfortunate," said Annie, as if he were speaking of one in whom she was very slightly interested. "And what is the young lady's name; and where does she live?"

He flushed redly, and answered quickly: "That I can not tell you, Annie, and it is quite certain, if you will not release me from my engagement without that knowledge, you would not with it."

She looked at him from beneath the golden lashes of her eyelids with the prettiest show of playful curiosity, as she said: "It is really unkind of you not to tell me. If I had had a little flirtation in your absence, I assure you I would have told you the gentleman's name and all about him."

"I do not doubt, Annie, that you were far more faithful than I," he cried in desperation. "But I swear to you I intended to fulfill the promise I made you."

"Intended to?" she asked, arching her eyebrows.

"And if you hold me to my engagement, after all I

have said," he continued, "I will be to you a kind and faithful husband. But Annie, Annie, my heart is another's, but leave me free, to dispose of that as I wish, and I will gladly give to you the deeds of the houses and lands which have caused this trouble."

Annie arose from her seat, and looked at him with as much dignified amazement, as it was possible for her to assume, and then, to Frederic Morgan's utter consternation, sank at his feet in a swoon.

His first impulse was to call his mother, and the second to exercise his personal skill in restoring her to animation. There was water and vinaigrette at hand, and in a few moments her eyes unclosed, and she feebly raised her head from the arm on which he had pillowed it.

At that moment, if she had but said she loved him, that she grieved to part from him, he would have taken her to his heart almost with joy. But rising from his arms, and sinking languidly into a chair, she murmured:—

"How could you be so cruel? What a ridiculous situation to place one in. Every one would say you had jilted me. Horrible," and she shuddered from head to foot.

Now, Frederic Morgan was a physician, and a thoroughly practical one too, and therefore, perhaps, should not have been alarmed by the sudden faintness of a lady, but nevertheless, he was greatly so in this case, and looked at the tiny figure before him with the utmost solicitude, as she continued:—

"You know, Frederic, I promised uncle I would marry you, as I have expected to do so, and every one has expected it of me. I am very much obliged to you for your kind offer; it is very considerate upon your part, I'm sure, but dear me, every thing is ready. I should die, I am certain."

Frederic Morgan stood before her, and in impassioned

words declared to her his heart. But she did not for an instant read it aright. In her intense selfishness she supposed him to be pleading for her happiness, not for his own, and that of the woman he loved. "Annie," he cried, at length, "what now is your answer?"

"Why, dear me," she said gayly, "I could dismiss you, no doubt, if I had the heart to do it, and all the world would declare it perfectly right and proper, but really, I should never be happy, my falsity would haunt me even in my dreams. No, dear Frederic, I will never break my word, I will be your wife."

"And," she added to herself, "nothing could be more elegant than that lace veil we were looking at in Stewart's three weeks ago."

Frederic Morgan spoke not another word. He had told her all, and had left the decision of their fate to her, and she had decided it. A sudden faintness came over him, more terrible than any mere physical weakness could have brought over him, and looking blindly at the figure in the chair before him, and thinking madly, despairingly of that other, his lost love! Aldeane! Aldeane, he staggered from the room.

And this was the parting of an affianced pair. Even Annie Greyson thought it a strange one, as she arose from her chair, and stepping to the long mirror, gazed at her reflection for some moments, and murmured at last:—

"How inconsiderate of Fred! How could he ever think I would place myself in such an absurd position. Dear me, what a disagreeable thing it is to cry, and its effects are so distressing too. I declare my eyes and nose are quite red," and with a pout Miss Greyson threw herself into a chair, and patiently fanned her face, until such time as she could safely look into the mirror without being shocked by the traces of the tears shed, in the first private interview she had ever held with the man whom she was to marry.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO IMPORTANT LETTERS.

ONE evening, some three weeks after the event recorded in the last chapter, Arthur Guthrie sat alone in his office—his private office—for he had been admitted to the bar two months before, and was now the junior partner in the firm of Halcombe and Guthrie. His associate Chester Halcombe was a gentlemanly young fellow, who, lacking all the qualities necessary to a legal practitioner, brought into the firm implicit faith in his more clever partner, and the excellent connection of his uncle, the late Edgar Halcombe.

As Arthur Guthrie sat before the glowing fire in the grate, leaning his arm upon a table bestrewn with documents, he could not but admit that he was a very fortunate fellow, with every prospect of an early rise in life, with a thousand friends, and but one enemy. Yes, there was one enemy, and, although Arthur Guthrie never met him, and seldom heard of him, and never but of his rapidly increasing wealth, he had, to his own mind numerous proofs that Jonas Nevins had not forgotten him.

He was thinking of this, and of one other thing that troubled him even more, when his little office boy announced a gentleman, and Mr. Ashton entered.

The color rushed over Arthur's face, as he arose to greet his visitor, and dyed it still more readily, a second time, when he asked for Miss Ashton.

"Well, I scarcely think Belle has been in her usual

good health of late," replied Mr. Ashton, as he took the seat which Arthur offered him. "She seems, in fact, quite out of spirits."

Arthur murmured something about being very sorry, and did not seem in very high spirits himself, and that Mr. Ashton quickly noticed.

"What's the matter, Arthur?" he asked. "Business dull?"

"It never was better."

"Then, what do you mean by such a long face as that? That rascal hasn't—"

"Yes, he has," interrupted Arthur, quickly. "I told you just now that business was never better, but in fact, El-dridge and Morse took their affairs out of our hands yesterday, and they were clients of Mr. Halcombe's for years."

"Indeed," said Mr. Ashton, with a troubled face. "What reason did they assign?"

"The same as Mr. Leigh did last week: the superior claims of Keith and Hayes."

"Was there no complaint made of either Halcombe or yourself?"

"None," answered Arthur. "But—"and he hesitated for an instant, "Halcombe has been telling me an absurd tale that is upon the streets."

"I have heard it," interrupted Mr. Ashton, quickly. "Charles Evans was telling us it the other night. The bare idea of you, a gambler and drunkard, it is indeed absurd. I never saw Belle so angry in my life."

Arthur Guthrie covered his face with his hands. "That she should have heard it," he murmured.

Mr. Ashton affected not to hear him, but after looking at him keenly for a moment, began to talk of his own business affairs, and as he was not going to Rose Cottage that night, remained at the office until it was quite dark, when they repaired to a dining-hall together.

Here they met Mr. Halcombe, who, as his manner was, regaled them with all the *on dits* of the day, and as a specially choice morsel, informed them of the engagement of Dr. Morgan and his cousin. "And poor Fred is actually to become a Benedict within ten days," he concluded.

"I am sorry to take away your triumph, Chester," said Arthur, quietly, "but really, I've known of that matter for a week past. Let us drink to the health of the happy couple."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Halcombe, "You always were, and always will be, before me, Arthur. I shouldn't wonder now, if you have been invited to be groomsman or something of the sort."

"I tell no state secrets!" cried Arthur, gayly, and the subject dropped, to be renewed again, when Arthur and Mr. Ashton were alone, in the cozy back office, which was in fact the home of the junior partner, and then he informed Mr. Ashton, that Chester's jesting surmise was indeed correct, that Frederic Morgan had invited him to be one of his groomsmen, while George Raymond was to be the other.

"And the bridesmaids," asked Mr. Ashton.

"Miss Arendell is to be one certainly, and Miss Ashton is counted upon for the other."

"Indeed! And she will act with you of course. But I can tell you, Arthur, you will have to make your peace with her first, as she thinks you have neglected us of late."

"Good God!" cried Arthur, suddenly, with seemingly unaccountable vehemence, "how has it been possible for me to go there, knowing that she has heard these atrocious tales."

"That should have made no difference," returned Mr. Ashton. "You know Belle is too truly your friend to believe any thing to your discredit. Now, Arthur, I do not

wish to dictate to you, but I think you should, in your position, endeavor to retain all your friends. It is quite certain that Nevins is trying to ruin you, and you must rally all your forces against him, though I am pretty certain of silencing him very effectually. But we must wait, we must wait."

Arthur looked at him in some surprise, but Mr. Ashton did not seem inclined to speak further upon the subject, but abruptly asked Arthur whether he intended to accept Frederic Morgan's invitation, adding that he would do well to secure so powerful a friend.

"My need of securing such friends," answered Arthur, "is my chief reason for declining the honor Morgan proposes to me. I want to work my own way against that villain."

"Pooh, pooh!" ejaculated Mr. Ashton. "It will in no degree detract from your independence and worth, to surround yourself with reliable friends. By the way, that fellow is amassing a vast fortune, I hear. Well, well, he will need it all;" and he rubbed his hands gleefully together, and laughed so triumphantly, that Arthur could not refrain from asking him what special knowledge he held of Nevins.

"You are right in supposing that I have some special knowledge of Nevins," returned Mr. Ashton, gravely; "but what it is, or how I gained it, I can not at present inform you; and I will only tell you this, that the time will come, when neither you nor your friends will regret that they stood between you and that man's persecutions."

"It rejoices me to hear it!" cried Arthur, hopefully, "for knowing that, I shall have less fear of mingling with them, and in a manner associating them with my interests and pursuits. Yet even with this vague hint of the villainy of my persecutor which you have given me, it is hard for me to bear calmly the aspersions which I know he is secretly

casting upon my name. I have had serious thoughts of calling upon him, and warning him upon his peril to continue his base calumnies."

"The worst course you could possibly pursue," said Mr. Ashton. "He would defy you, of course, and make out a case against you that would ring through the city in a fortnight. Such a thing is easily spread, in this way for instance," and Mr. Ashton drew from his pocket a letter, and handed it to Arthur, saying, "Read that, and tell me if you can, who took the pains to write it. It is signed, 'A Boston Friend.' Whether that means a style of friend peculiar to this city, or a friend who is merely a resident here, I am at a loss to determine. If the former, I tremble for Boston."

Unheeding these last remarks, Arthur had opened and eagerly perused the letter, which, written in a cramped, and evidently, disguised hand, contained the following words:—

"CHARLES ASHTON, Esq.:—

"DEAR SIR: As an old and, I trust, a somewhat valued friend, both of yourself and your lovely daughter, I feel constrained to perform the unpleasant duty of acquainting you with some facts concerning a young gentleman in whom it is well known you take a warm interest. I allude to Mr. Arthur Guthrie.

"In the first place, I will take the liberty first of relating a little event which took place about two months ago; it will perhaps illustrate the character of the young man more than any words of mine could possibly do. Premising, that I am perfectly willing that you should seek whatever proof you may wish, in the most expeditious way that may occur to you."

"Now isn't that the most absurd thing" interrupted Mr. Ashton, who had risen and was glancing over Arthur's shoulder as he read. "As if I was going into every saloon on—— Street to inquire whether 'a tall young man'

was ever seen there. But go on; you don't understand me."

"I was going down —— Street, with some gentlemen, Mr. Nevins among the rest, when I saw a tall young man issue from one of the most noted gambling saloons. He seemed very drunk, and as he reeled past me, shouted out in a loud voice; and with a feeling of horror I recognized it, and exclaimed, 'Is it possible that that is young Mr. Guthrie!'

"'I am sure it was,' said one.

"'Ah! he is going the road to ruin rapidly,' remarked another.

"'Rapidly, indeed!' said Mr. Nevins. 'Poor fellow, I pity him. With his unusual talents and fine personal appearance, he might make an enviable reputation in the world: but, with his unfortunate propensities, I fear the very worst for him.'"

"'Curse him!'" hissed Arthur, bitterly.

"'Have you no other proof that the person you saw was Mr. Guthrie?' asked Mr. Nevins, with a faint intonation of doubt still in his voice.

"'I could scarcely believe what I had seen, I assure you, Mr. Ashton, though my eyes do not often play me false. 'Let us go into the saloon,' I said, 'and ask the name of the young man who has just passed.'"

"'My suggestion was eagerly seconded by all present, except Mr. Nevins, who considerably desired that no further proof might be obtained of his step-son's delinquency. However the majority carried the point, and we went in to make inquiries. The keeper of the saloon declined to tell his name, but inadvertently admitted that he was a young lawyer, doing business in this city. 'He hasn't lost much yet,' said the man, 'but I wouldn't like to trust much money in his hands.'"

"'The villain!'" cried Arthur, with uncontrollable passion. "This is, indeed, more than I can bear. This un-

doubtedly is the vile story that has already affected my practice so sensibly."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Ashton. "Now read the rest and tell me if that too is false."

"The above fact, I have thought it my duty to make known to you, as Mr. Guthrie has often boasted of his intimacy with you and your daughter, of whom he has often declared himself the favored suitor, and has openly made calculations of the amount of fortune which he will receive with her. This point I should never have mentioned, but for the unpleasant notoriety given to Miss Ashton's name."

Arthur read no further, though there were several additional lines. He dashed the letter upon the table, and paced the room excitedly.

"Mr. Ashton!" he exclaimed, suddenly turning to the gentleman who was keenly watching him: "That I have ever spoken of Miss Ashton in the manner imputed to me, is false, but now I feel that I must declare my true offense, and give you the real reason for my seeming neglect of you. I love Miss Ashton."

Mr. Ashton did not seem at all surprised, and indeed the expression of his countenance did not change in the least as Arthur continued:—

"I have even, sir, had some presumptuous hopes of becoming worthy of her, and of obtaining a position which she could share without loss. Mr. Ashton, I have for months past known these hopes to be vain."

"And of course," said Mr. Ashton, though without any special severity, "you never mentioned this to Belle."

Arthur flushed to the temples. "I am afraid, sir," he said at last, in a low voice, "that I did once—only once—tell her something of my hopes."

"Indeed," remonstrated Mr. Ashton, "I am surprised at you, Arthur, surprised."

"Miss Ashton was so beautiful," murmured Arthur

hopelessly. "I did not mean to speak, but I could not help it."

"And of course," returned Mr. Ashton, most unexpectedly, "Belle couldn't help expressing her indignation at such conduct, and, by the way, here is a note she gave me to deliver to you, which is no doubt expressive of the same."

Arthur took the note with trembling fingers, remembering that Belle's face upon that day had not been so expressive of indignation as her father appeared to suppose. Opening the little missive, he read with feelings indescribable, the following lines:

DEAR ARTHUR:—Papa has shown me the anonymous letter concerning you which he has just received. Oh, Arthur, I know it is all false, every bit false, I wish you would come to Rose Cottage that I might tell you so. Dear Arthur, I know you are in trouble, and that that is the reason you absent yourself from us, and a thousand times a day I have reproached myself with the thought that this would not have been so, if I had done my duty to myself and you, when——. Oh, Arthur, I know these tales are false. I will trust you in spite of all the world. Papa says I may write this, and I think I once promised you, I would answer you sometime, and I do not fear but you will read clearly the emotions which prompt me.

Yours,

BELLE.

Arthur remained for a few moments in a state of ecstatic bewilderment. "Mr. Ashton" he exclaimed at last, "can it be that your daughter loves me, and that you will give her to me, a poor, and persecuted man? My darling, how noble and fearless she is."

"And what a coquette," interrupted Mr. Ashton. "Now, the truth is, Arthur, I have suspected this for a

long time, and upon the receipt of that letter, I taxed Belle with the truth. Of course she couldn't deny it, and, fancying you the most persecuted, and herself the cruellest of mortals—for she told me she had actually laughed at you—she begged me to allow her to answer your words of a year ago. I said it would be as ridiculous as the story of the silent gentleman and his silent servant.”

“Mr. Ashton” cried Arthur, “it was noble, it was the deed of an angel. Yet how can I suffer her to share my uncertain fortunes. I——” and he glanced at the anonymous letter.

“My dear fellow!” cried Mr. Ashton, warmly, “You shall ask Belle what she cares for that, while I will at the same time publish that letter and the fact that you are to become my son-in-law.”

Arthur wrung his hand and spoke no more of dismal prospects that night. But, it is reported, sat down almost immediately, and wrote pages upon pages to the lady of his love, over which her father shrugged his shoulders, and his daughter alternately wept and smiled, through the few joyful, yet seemingly interminable days, before Arthur Guthrie visited Rose Cottage, and gained from her lips—with perhaps something still sweeter—the same confession her hand had written—even a more complete one, though it could scarcely be more satisfactory—the confession of her love.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "MERRY WEDDING."

THE carriage had rolled around the bend of the road, bearing Colonel Arendell, his wife, and daughter, upon the first stage of their journey North. The children, after a burst of tears, and a score of lamentations, had rushed off to enjoy the holiday which Aldeane had awarded them, while she, with emotions too deep for words, and many, indeed, which she was resolved no mortal should ever learn, stood upon the porch in a mournful reverie, which was at last broken by the voice of Aunt Roxy, proceeding from the depths of her check apron.

"Well, I do wish dey wos back ag'in," she sobbed. "I do hate to hab Miss Nory go 'way."

"Yes, it will be very lonely, auntie," replied Aldeane.

"'Pears to me, she is de purtiest an' best chile I hab eber seed in all my sublunatory resistance! No more like her ma was, den a 'possum's like a jay-bird. Don't eben look like her!"

"Ah! what sort of a lady was she?"

"She was tall as a bean pole, wid de greatest black eyes, and de blackest ha'r I eber seen, and I tell you, dem white hands o' hern would sting! Ugh! I've felt 'em many a time!"

"She had not a very gentle temper, then?"

"You're right dere, Miss Aldeane. I tell ye she used to rile out often at de niggers, and Mass'r John too, for dat matter. I tell you she did lub money powerful well. Neber could see how Mass'r John come to marry her, no

how! I 'spee dat she acted mighty fine when he was a courtin' her; an' don't say nothin' about it, Miss Aldeane, she ruled him slick enough after she got him, too."

"You fancy that, I guess!" replied Aldeane, laughing.

"No marm, I don't. Leastways eberybody else tinks de same ting. An' deres dat Mass'r Richard Blake, he was her cousin, and oberseer den. Why, bress yer heart he knowed things dat happened den, dat it's taken thousands o' dollars to make him keep still about. Folks said dat it was through dem two dat Mass'r John got so much of his brudder's property. Dey brought in claims dat swallered up most all ob de estate. Dat's how Mass'r John got Samira, and me, and a heap ob de oder niggers. Folks say dis, an' I b'lieves 'em."

"But you should not believe all you hear. The poor lady may have had enemies."

"Dat she had! a many a one, and she orter had more, too! Oh, I tell you de way she used ter make de niggers fly, wasn't slow; more whippin' done on de place in one year den dere has been all de time Miss Idy's been here. Some say Miss Lu—dat was her name—had a spite ag'in my mass'r dat was, 'case he wouldn't marry her. He was a mighty fine man, though he purty nigh got us all sold, by bein' so wild when he was young."

"Was he married?"

"Yes, he was; an'— Oh, Lordy me, Zet! dem, pies is a-burnin', dem pies is a-burnin'!" And Aunty Roxy hurried away to the kitchen, leaving Aldeane to turn to the active duties of the school-room. The house seemed half deserted, and the children unusually stupid and querulous. The day passed drearily—the harbinger of many still more desolate, that followed during that lonely winter.

The twenty-first of November rose in unclouded brightness, both North and South, yet it bore a fresh weight

of agony to two hearts. Aldeane spent the day in tears and prayer; Frederic Morgan in despairing melancholy. He sat in his dressing-room, when Arthur Guthrie, followed by his fellow-groomsman, Mr. George Raymond, entered it and exclaimed, "What, doctor—not ready yet? The carriage is at the door—come, hurry!"

Frederic slowly arose from the large arm-chair in which he had been sitting, and turned toward the toilet-table, sighing deeply, as he said, "Take seats, gentlemen, I will not detain you long."

They complied, and were soon engaged in an animated conversation. Doctor Morgan, as he was now called, slowly and wearily completed his toilet. At some trifling jest from Arthur, he turned suddenly, to their surprise revealing a face pale as death, and contracted with agony. Arthur started, and said in a low voice to his friend:—

"Good God! is he ill."

"I don't know, Morgan; you had better take a glass of wine before you go. It is pretty cold this morning."

"Yes!" returned he, turning to the glass, and regarding his reflection with a sorrowful glance. "Ring the bell, if you please, Arthur!"

"Bring some port and sherry," he said, when the servant appeared. It was soon before them, and Frederic drained glass after glass, until placing his hand on his arm, Mr. Raymond said, warningly:—

"Enough, Fred! we must go; Miss Annie will become impatient. I presume she is already on her way to the church."

They were soon gliding briskly over the snow, toward the church, where they found the bridal party awaiting them. Annie Greyson, beautifully arrayed in white silk, lace, and costly jewels, smiled joyously as Frederic took her hand, while a quick flush arose to the cheek of Belle Ashton, as Arthur Guthrie, as her attendant, approached her. Mr. Raymond and Leonore Arendell were the other

attendants, and as they followed the betrothed pair into the church, many thought a handsomer group could not have been selected. The ceremony was in the Episcopal form, and during its lengthy performance, though outwardly calm, Frederic was greatly agitated. His hair fell in damp masses over his pale brow, and the hand raised to toss it back trembled fearfully. Annie, calm and self-possessed herself, wondered that he was so excited, but failed to see that his emotion was the shiver of despair, rather than the tremor of gratified hope and love. Arthur and Belle alone guessed the truth. They marked the choked utterance, the cold fingers which clasped so lightly the little hand within them. They saw the forced smiles, that broke into gleams of agony over his face, and knew that Frederic Morgan did not love the woman he was marrying, but that his heart was truly another's. At the conclusion of the ceremony the groom passed his arm around his new-made wife, and kissed her in so strange a manner, that, looking with a startled glance into his face, she inquired anxiously, "Dear husband, are you ill?"

"No, I shall recover in a moment," he whispered, shuddering as he heard the name of husband from her lips. "I am a little excited—nothing more!"

Annie readily believed his words, and in the hurry of receiving congratulations, and the departure from the church, failed to notice his violent efforts to obtain composure. He was watched, however, by both Arthur and Belle, who rejoiced to see, that after their arrival at the house, he was as self-possessed, if not as gay as usual. A grand reception was given in the evening, and Mrs. Arendell was rejoiced to discover that Leonore was universally admired, nor were they at all displeased to notice the impression she had evidently made upon Mr. Raymond, which were truly remarkable, Doctor Morgan informed his sister, as he had never regarded any lady with

ought but indifference, and had a thousand times declared to him his intention of living and dying a bachelor. But the beautiful Leonore Arendell appeared already to have weakened that determination, as he scarcely left her side during the entire evening.

She was indeed surprisingly beautiful in her rich but simple robe, and the delicate pearls, for which she had stipulated, strands of which confined her dark hair, and encircled her white throat and arms. The novelty of the scene delighted her, and excitement lent a new tint of crimson to her cheeks, and luster to her beautiful eyes. The brilliant light fell softly over the rich brown curls, that fell in abundance over her pearly shoulders. As Colonel Arendell watched her floating lightly with Mr. Raymond in the airy mazes of the dance, he felt arising in his heart aspirations for her of which before he had never dreamed; and traced in the dim vistas of the future scenes of happiness through which she should pass, the loved and admired of all. Mrs. Arendell touched his arm. "Is she not beautiful?" she queried. "Our Southern star beams with full luster to night, that has cast but a mellow radiance before. I wish Aldeane Guthrie was here to see her." Ah! little she thought that at that very moment, she was experiencing the deepest meaning of woe and desolation.

Doctor Morgan approached them. His cheeks were burning with fever. Mrs. Arendell touched his hand; it was hot and dry.

"Where is your wife?" she asked.

"O God!" he thought, "must they all remind me of her relationship to me!" but he answered calmly, "With Mr. Guthrie, I believe. Will you dance this set with me?"

"Certainly!" and as he led her away she said, in a low voice, "Frederic, don't drink any more to-night. I saw, when you were taking wine in the dining-room with Mr. Gartrell, that your hand shook badly."

"Oh! don't fear for me! Wine will have no effect upon me; a pipe of it would not quench the burning fever that consumes me. I am perfectly sober. Do you doubt it?"

"No," she replied, smiling; "but remain so. I did not know that you were such a veritable toper that you could stand any amount. Pray don't follow the example of young Lounsberry. I see that he is quite overcome."

Frederic laughed derisively. "My mother and Lady Bride shall never see me in that situation."

"Annie is beautiful to-night," said Mrs. Arendell.

"Yes. But so quiet, so precise, so calmly beautiful!" interrupted Frederic, pettishly. "Oh! that she had a little more vitality! Her beauty is like sweet wine, pleasant but not exhilarating; and its effects are as weak and transient!"

Mrs. Arendell looked up in surprise. "Such words from a new-made husband!" she exclaimed, hastily. "Ah! I see you are jesting," as Frederic, to remove the impression that his words had created, assumed the mischievous smile which he had worn so often of old. "But do not repeat the jest to any one else!"

"I shall not, Ida. I merely wished to test your credulity. But here comes Mr. Guthrie with my bride." Rising, he took Annie's hand, and drew it within his arm. "See how gladly I receive her. Arthur, there is a call for a waltz. I know you are never too weary to dance."

Nor was his partner, the young lady to whom it was by this time known he was engaged; and many, as they looked after them, while they wondered that Mr. Ashton should consent to the marriage of his daughter with a young man whose reputation had been of late rumored to be somewhat doubtful, owned that in outward seeming at least they were perfectly matched.

A week later Aldeane received from her friend a full account of this "merry wedding," together with some

shrewd conjectures concerning the state of mind of the their old acquaintance, George Raymond, toward her pupil; and strangely it appeared even to her, remembering though she did his mysterious and gloomy character, she trembled for the welfare of Leonore Arendell, and daily prayed and longed for her safe and speedy return to the seclusion of her home.

And meanwhile she willed to bear her own griefs calmly; and though she could not ignore them, or even wish to do so, she wept but few vain tears over them, and summoned her brightest smiles to welcome the news of the happiness of her brother and her dearest friend—the happiness which, she sighed, could never be her own.

CHAPTER XX.

LEONORE'S STRANGE LOVER.

THE newly-wedded pair spent the following month in New York, and returned home to spend the Christmas and New Year's festivities. The Arendells and Mr. Raymond had, meanwhile, spent the time at Morganvale and in Boston alternately, amid a round of gayeties, in which Belle Ashton, notwithstanding her publicly announced engagement, was still a star.

She stood by the fire upon the afternoon of the last day of the Old Year, laughingly thinking how Arthur had jestingly commented upon this the last time they met, and had said if he were not the most reasonable being in the world he would be fearfully jealous of these gay butterflies of wealth and fashion, and proudly saying that such jealousy would be the height of absurdity, for who was half so handsome, so good, so talented as he, when a sleigh drove up to the door, to which she hastened, as she saw her lover alight.

He was accompanied by Chester Halcombe, who, perhaps purposely, lingered on the porch, shaking the snow from his hat and shoulders, until the greeting between his partner and their lovely hostess had been effected. But presently, when Belle, with the most brightly glowing cheeks, looked out upon him, he hastened toward her, exclaiming:—

“How do you do, Miss Ashton? You are looking charming, as usual. I should have paid my respects to

such beauty before, but truly, this snow is the most adhesive it has ever been my lot to encounter!"

"You are perfectly excusable!" she replied, shaking hands with him heartily. Another sleigh at that moment stopped at the gate, and she was soon busily engaged in welcoming the Arendells, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, and Mr. Raymond. Casting aside her fur cloak, Leonore ran to the fireplace, and took a seat in a low chair, which she drew close to the fire, exclaiming:—

"Such cold weather! It is enough to freeze one! I can not endure the cold."

Mr. Raymond crossed the room, and leaning against the mantel, looked thoughtfully down upon her.

"Come, Leonore!" said Mrs. Arendell, as the party left the parlor to go to the dressing-rooms.

"In a moment, mamma! but I declare, I can't move before I get a little thawed out. Oh, dear! I shall freeze before I get South again!"

"Then you would not like Canada?" inquired Mr. Raymond, in a low voice.

Her face crimsoned, as she replied simply, "I don't know, sir."

"It is very cold there," he said.

She rose to her feet, shivering slightly, and picking up her fur mantle, hurried from the room thinking, "What can he mean? Oh! what can he mean?"

"Why, Leonore, your face is crimson!" ejaculated Mrs. Arendell, as she entered the room.

"Yes," she murmured, as she turned to the mirror. "It is such a change from intense cold to this fervent heat."

It seemed to be a merry party that met at Rose Cottage, to see the old year out, and welcome the new one in. Mr. Halcombe and Mr. Ashton were in extravagant spirits. And privately begged Arthur to leave the law office behind him for once; advice, which in spite of

recent vexations he was not slow in following. Dr. Morgan, his wife said, was still afflicted with the nervous affection, with which he had been troubled ever since his return from the South, though he evidently endeavored to free himself of the troublesome disease.

Leonore indulged unrestrainedly in mirth and laughter; seeming to enjoy her game at whist, with Mr. Raymond for partner, with a zest and noise, altogether incompatible with the rules of the game. To her surprise, Belle discovered Mr. Raymond regarding the gay little Southerner with an anxious, troubled look, while he replied to her merry sallies. What obstacle could cross the smooth path of his love? For so constant had been his attendance on Leonore since Dr. Morgan's wedding, that all took it for granted, that he was a suitor for her hand, and believed he had found favor in her eyes; while his distinguished appearance; his wealth, and social position, could not fail to strongly recommend him to her family. Why, then, that troubled, almost despairing look! Belle thought she had found a solution of the mystery, when he said, "Come, Miss Leonore, we must win to-night. Perhaps, it is the last time we shall play together."

"What do you mean?" asked Leonore, glancing at him apprehensively.

"I have to start for Canada immediately. I have received a stern reprimand from my senior partner to-day. The time has passed so pleasantly, that I can scarcely realize that I have been absent from Toronto six weeks."

"I thought," said Arthur, "that your partnership was merely nominal. That your presence at Toronto was unnecessary. One would think so, from your long visits to England, France, and many of the States."

"It is as you say," replied Mr. Raymond. "Yet sometimes I am wanted. Such is the case at present."

"And must you go soon?" inquired Leonore, in a low voice, making a misdeal in her confusion.

"Yes," he returned, taking up his cards, and examining them attentively. "I am sorry it is so, but Mr. Peirson is very imperative."

"So, I suppose we shall see you no more this winter, Mr. Raymond," said Belle.

"I presume not, Miss Ashton," he answered, a look of exquisite pain passing over his face as he glanced at Leonore, who regarded him sorrowfully. "But while I am in this charmed circle, 'Away dull care!' The cold and darkness will come soon enough after I leave you."

Leonore sighed. "We shall miss you very much, Mr. Raymond."

"Not for long, I guess!" he returned, with a forced laugh, and an attempt at gayety, which failed most signally.

A cloud seemed to have fallen upon the merriment of all within hearing of this conversation. With the intuitive sympathy of woman, Belle felt all that was passing in Leonore's heart, and knew the changing emotions that flushed or paled her cheeks. And when, at a late hour, the party were preparing to return to Morganvale, Belle insisted that she should not again encounter the chill midnight air; but urged her to remain with her for the night; for she rightly conjectured, that the night would be passed away in tears in the solitude of her chamber, when the presence of another would check her grief. Leonore gladly accepted the invitation and, as the others were about to depart, Dr. Morgan said:—

"No doubt, Mr. Raymond will be happy to come for you in the morning, Nora. If not, I will do so myself."

"I had already promised myself that pleasure!" interposed Mr. Raymond, "and I assure you I do not wish to be deprived of it."

Leonore bowed, saying: "What time may I expect you, then?"

"At about ten o'clock, Miss Arendell! I doubt whether I should find you up before; your drooping lids now attest your weariness."

"Then let us go before she falls asleep!" interrupted Dr. Morgan. Making their adieus, the company hastily departed, leaving the Ashtons and their guests to separate with many conflicting emotions agitating the bosoms of each.

Leonore joyfully assented to Belle's proposal that she should share her apartment. After the lights had been put out, and darkness and silence brooded over the house, Belle was not surprised to find the slender form beside her shaking with painfully suppressed sobs.

She let her weep for some time unrestrainedly, knowing well that the cause of her grief was the contemplated departure of Mr. Raymond.

At last, in order to turn her thoughts, if possible, into another channel, she said, cheerfully: "Not homesick, I hope, Leonore."

"No—yes," she sobbed.

Belle kissed her wet cheek, saying kindly, "There are hearts that love you here, as well as there, Leonore."

"Yes, but I want to see the children and Miss Aldeane. I love her so much, she is so good to every one."

"She is, indeed, I long to see her; but don't cry, dear, you will soon return home."

"Not until spring, pa says. We are to go back through Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. Oh, I wish it was all over with."

"Why, Leonore?"

"Oh, because——." A fresh burst of tears interrupted the sentence, but at last she said, hesitatingly, "It will be so lonely when Mr. Raymond is gone. You know he has taken me everywhere in and around Boston. He is so

very handsome! Don't you think so, Miss Belle? It is strange that any one so dark should be handsome; he is darker than Mr. Guthrie."

Belle made no reply, Leonore wept on, but the violence of her grief was soon exhausted, and wearied out, she soon became calmer.

"Doubtless," said Belle, "Mr. Raymond will soon come back; he travels so much, that I truly believe he will."

"Do you, indeed, Miss Ashton? Oh, I am so glad," and like a comforted child, Leonore fell into a deep sleep, and Belle knew that her object was attained, and fondly remembering her own happiness, prayed earnestly for that of her gentle little friend.

Mr. Raymond, as he had promised to do, came at about noon the following day to escort Miss Arendell home, and Belle was greatly disappointed, when she met them at Morganvale, a few hours later, where they were engaged for the New Year's dinner, to discover no trace of any satisfactory explanation having taken place between them, and that evening informed Arthur in confidence, that if George Raymond did not declare his love for Leonore before he left Morganvale, she should believe him to be an unprincipled villain.

And this opinion of his character was assuredly hers, when he left them two days later, without making the expected declaration,—at least if the evident sadness of Leonore and the general reticence of all at Morganvale were to be taken as evidence; and Miss Belle Ashton, in no measured terms, expressed her indignation to Aldeane Guthrie, and, strangely enough, relieved her of a load of anxieties and fears, which had unaccountably weighed down her heart and mind. And thereafter it was much easier for her to await patiently the time when she should again clasp in her arms her innocent, loving, and beloved pupil.

But before that time came, she had fresh troubles of

her own to encounter; the hateful attentions of the ex-
overseer were continually pressed upon her, and she had
learned, too, long before this, without knowing why or
how, that he possessed a certain power over Colonel Arc-
dell which would render any appeal from her perfectly
useless, and she knew that she must fight alone with this
man her battle, and firmly resolved, let what would come,
that she would never yield. Not that he threatened her.
But she fancied that he had shown her that it was in his
power to do so. He had spoken of her mother in mys-
terious tones, and he had told her, if she had one enemy
in the world—and he had hinted that that enemy might
be her step-father—he would ruin him, and do more for
her, and hers, than he dared mention, if she would but be
his wife.

All this he said to her, and yet she could gain nothing
from him that would make his purpose or her interest
in it clearer, and so doubting, fearing, yet defying her
tormentor, Aldeane passed the long and lonely winter.

CHAPTER XXI.

LEONORE'S LITTLE SECRET.

EARLY in April the Arendells were expected home. Frank and Eddie insisted upon accompanying the carriage to Loring to meet them. Aldeane and Jessie were upon the porch impatiently waiting their arrival, while Aunt Roxy and her aids bustled in and out of the kitchen to the dining-room and pantries, in hopeless confusion over the dinner in preparation for their welcome. Aldeane vainly endeavored to induce Jessie to be still; she made little excursions to the gate, then farther on to the bridge, returning each time with the mournful intelligence, "They ain't a-coming yet."

Aldeane was scarcely less anxious than her pupils, to see the travelers back again. The winter months had passed drearily, but on account of her double duties, she had had but little time for sorrowful reflections. She had doffed her mourning garments, and the plain blue dress she wore harmonized well with her bright complexion, giving her a more cheerful appearance than she had worn for many months. Smiles of pleased expectation too passed over her face, effectually destroying every trace of sadness. At last the carriage, greeted by a shout of joy from the negroes, appeared in view. Running down the walk, Aldeane caught Leonore in her arms as she descended from the carriage, receiving her first kiss, while Jessie climbed into the carriage to her mother, overwhelming her with caresses. Colonel Arendell greeted Aldeane cordially, exclaiming:—

"Why! Miss Guthrie, how well you look! So you have put off mourning in honor of our arrival, eh?"

"Yes, sir!" she replied. "I assure you I am so glad to see you back that I can not testify my joy sufficiently."

The servants gathered around the travelers, who, after speaking to them, made their way into the house, and to their own apartments. They soon met at the dinner-table, to discuss that welcome meal. The trunks had all been brought into the hall, and they were opened, displaying a great variety of presents for the servants, which they received with many manifestations of delight. A bright chintz dress and a large pair of ear-rings for Aunt Roxy, and a vest of showy pattern for Jule, causing the most envy. Leonore distributed the gifts to the little negroes, who had assembled together in the yard. One little fellow was throwing pebbles at some birds in the trees. "Don't throw stones at the birds, Len," said Leonore. "I have often forbidden you to do it."

"Lor'! missus, 'tain't nothin' but a little rock, 'twon't hurt the birds."

He threw it with unerring aim, and a sparrow fell fluttering to the ground.

"You are a bad boy, Len! a very bad boy!" exclaimed Leonore.

His mother sprang out of the porch and administered two or three sounding slaps to the offender. "Dere now, take dat! Ain't yer ashamed to act dat way afore yer young missus!"

"I am afraid you are a very bad boy, Len!" said Leonore, gravely. "I don't believe that there is any goodness in you."

"Oh! yes, missus, dere is!" he whimpered. "Dere's a plenty in me, but it stays dar; it won't come out!"

Leonore turned aside to conceal a smile, the negroes went away to the kitchen to sound the praises of "mass'r and missus" and to inspect anew their treasures.

Aldeane and the children were not forgotten. The Arendells presented her with many costly articles; while a large roll of music, some new books, and, above all, miniatures of themselves, were the joint offerings of Arthur and Belle.

Leonore seemed delighted to be again at home. She entertained Aldeane, the children, and servants with animated descriptions of her travels, telling of all the parties she had attended, and the places she had visited, which were entered by the slaves upon their catalogue of the wonderful. Happily for Aldeane, Doctor Morgan's wedding had become an old thing, and it was only mentioned casually. Aldeane was deeply gratified by this reticence, as she had feared a betrayal of, or at least a deep-trial to, her feelings, should the subject be fully introduced. She listened eagerly to all concerning Arthur and Belle. Of their engagement she had heard from both. Deeply thankful was she that her brother and her dearest friend, with mutual love and trust, were to tread life's path together.

A few days after the return of the Arendells, Jule entered the room with a number of letters, which he gave to Colonel Arendell.

"Any for me, papa?" inquired Leonore, eagerly.

He looked at them. "Two for Miss Guthrie; one for Mrs. Arendell; three for J. C.; and, yes! surely, one for Miss Leonore Arendell! Why! who can it be from?" he said, looking at her slyly.

"Oh! papa, please give it to me!" she exclaimed, blushing; and, snatching the letter from his hand, she hastened from the room.

Mrs. Arendell smiled and, glancing at the colonel, said,—

"Dear child! that letter contains at least a week's happiness for her. Aldeane, we have not yet told you—but it is as well for you to know—that our Nora is engaged

to a most worthy, handsome, and intelligent gentleman, Mr. George Raymond, of Toronto."

"Indeed! I am exceedingly surprised," she exclaimed, most truthfully. "She has often written to me of him in terms of high praise, but I had no idea that they were engaged! I thought that they finally separated in January."

"Oh! no; we met him afterward, quite accidentally, in New York. I suppose Leonore has been keeping her secret for oral communication. You must go to her for particulars. The only objection we have to it at all is, that he urges an immediate union; and she, one can readily see, is not averse to it. So we have given our consent for them to be married in June."

"So soon!" ejaculated Aldeane.

"Yes. I know it is a very short engagement, and she is young, but Mr. Raymond is not; and we place such perfect confidence in him that we do not fear for her welfare," returned Mrs. Arendell.

Aldeane asked no more; but, soon after reading her letters, one of which was from Belle, who descanted at length upon the "sweet little house pa is building for us in Boston," she left the room; and in passing the door of Leonore's apartment, opened it, and found her absorbed in the perusal of her letter.

"Come in, Miss Aldeane!" she said, lifting up her eyes, full of joyful tears.

Aldeane approached her, and smoothing down her brown curls, said softly, "I know all about it, Leonore, dear. May you be happy with the husband of your choice!"

"Has papa told you all?" inquired Leonore, blushing.

"Nothing but the name and position of your betrothed. He referred me to you for particulars, and indeed I am most anxious to hear them, for I was once well acquainted with Mr. Raymond."

"Yes, I know you were, my dearest darling," exclaimed Leonore, kissing her, as if her worth was increased a thousand-fold by that fact. "And isn't he handsome, my dear Miss Aldeane, and so learned, and so majestic altogether. Isn't it the greatest wonder in the world that he ever took any notice of me?"

"Such a plain little creature!" laughed Aldeane gayly, and yet with that unaccountable sinking of heart which had always come upon her at the thought of this event, over which she was expected, and earnestly endeavored, to rejoice; "and now tell me, my own, how this miracle was brought about, how he ever descended from his height to look at you."

"Ah, now I know you are laughing at me," cried Leonore, blushing, and pinching the cheek of her friend; "but indeed, though you say it in fun, I think it was a miracle. Even now, I can scarcely believe he loves me."

"I used to think him very truthful," remarked Aldeane, with mock gravity, and then Leonore pinched her cheek again, and when Aldeane entreated her "to tell her all about it," she said she would only do it on condition that Aldeane made no more confusing remarks, but listened to her in silence from beginning to end.

To this Aldeane very readily agreed, and Leonore delightedly began the relation of the great event of her life—an event which in strangeness and joyfulness she firmly believed had never been equaled, "because he loves me so, you know," she could not help pausing to explain.

"Certainly," said Aldeane, pretending pique, "but I really think you might have told me your secret before."

"And so I ought," exclaimed Leonore, quite penitently, "but it was such a charming one to keep, and grew so much better all the time. But in fact," she added

seriously, "I never knew how to begin, for you never asked me any questions. Why didn't you, now? I should have asked a thousand questions if I had been in your place."

Aldeane laughed, as she answered, "I thought the matter was settled long ago."

"Oh, yes, when I wrote you of his departure for Canada."

Aldeane nodded.

"And so you guessed my feelings though I did not tell you a word, of how, in secret, I grieved over his absence, which caused a void in my heart that nothing could fill, and a pain that nothing could assuage!"

"No."

"I believe Miss Ashton guessed it all, though, for she was so kind and gentle to me then, and afterward. She continually prophesied that he would return; but he came not. We did not correspond, for he left me seemingly with the mere sorrow one feels at breaking up a pleasant acquaintanceship, fully convincing me that he thought of me, merely as the friend of an hour, while I felt that to me he was the love of a lifetime. I heard of him, through his letters to Uncle Fred, during our stay at Morganvale, but in a few weeks we left there, and went to New York. Mother has many friends there; and we lived very gayly, attending many parties, visiting the theaters and other places of amusement, besides which, we stayed at the most fashionable hotel, where there was much to be seen to interest and amuse one. But, notwithstanding all these attractions, I was ill at ease, and longed for the quiet of home, and your dear companionship, Miss Aldeane.

"One day, when we had been there about two weeks, while at the dinner-table, to my great surprise I saw Mr. Raymond enter, and take a seat immediately opposite me. He observed me a moment afterward; apparently

his surprise was greater than my own, and his emotion to me then inexplicable. He half rose from his chair, the whiteness of his face terrifying me. But it flushed crimson instantaneously, and bowing politely he reseated himself. Pa and ma were delighted to see him, and invited him to our private apartments. He came and spent the evening with us. I was entranced by his conversation and his calm majestic bearing. His dark eyes that flashed almost fiercely upon others, beamed with gentleness on me. His voice seemed to assume a lower key and a greater degree of sweetness, when he addressed me. I waited with eagerness for every word, and possessed exquisite happiness if he smiled upon me.

"You may think this very foolish, Miss Aldeane, but I can not help it. He fascinates me, I even tremble in his presence, while his mind seems without an effort to rule my own, and my heart with it. I felt all this more deeply then than I do now, when I can lay my head upon his throbbing bosom, and smile away his frowns.

"But this freedom was not easily obtained. A fierce struggle seemed to agitate him before he spoke those words that insured my happiness. Father and mother had gone out to spend the evening. I had excused myself from going with them, and was left alone in our apartments, but not for long, there was a knock at the door, and opening it I saw Mr. Raymond.

"'Is Colonel Arendell within?' he asked, after saluting me.

"'No, pa and ma are both out,' I replied.

"'Then I will go away again,' he said, eyeing me nervously, and turning the door knob, as if he wished an invitation to enter.

"'Pity my loneliness!' I said, smiling.

"He came in; I took a chair near the grate, pointing him to one opposite. He did not take it, but leaned against the mantel-piece, looking at me so strangely, that I

trembled beneath his gaze. My heart must have been reflected in my face, for suddenly he threw himself down before me, clasping my hands in his, and exclaimed, 'Leonore! Leonore! I am dying for love of you! Will you. Can you love me?'

"I was so overcome with surprise and emotion, that I could not answer. His eyes were fixed in an intense gaze upon mine. 'For God's sake tell me?' he pleaded, and I murmured, 'Yes.'

"He seemed overwhelmed with delight. As he pressed my head against his bosom, and held me in his strong arms, he whispered, 'And you will be my wife!'

"I raised my eyes to his face, that they might answer for me; a change passed over him. He became as pale as death, and staggering back a few paces, muttered hoarsely, 'No! no! such sweetness and beauty, such perfect love and trust, can never be mine!'

"'They shall be yours alone!' I exclaimed, clinging still more closely to him, for I could not lose my new-found happiness so quickly. He bent down and kissed me, murmuring repeatedly, 'God wills it! It is his recompense!'

"I could not bear the fierce light in his eyes, and the look of exultation with which he regarded me. An indefinable fear crept into my heart. I felt his caresses shudderingly, but when I again glanced up, tenderness and joy illumined his features, and the words he spoke were those of love and cheer; and peace again filled my heart.

"Papa readily gave his consent to our union. Mr. Raymond seemed so pleased with his confidence, though papa told him there was no merit in that, as he had taken especial pains to learn all particulars concerning him, from the proper sources. There was one little thing which papa seemed disposed to object to, for even Mr. Raymond couldn't say who and what he really was. But, do you know, Aldeane, I was almost glad of that,

for he is so superior to me in every other respect, that I was glad even to have so slight a thing as good birth to balance my inferiority."

Aldeane looked at her gravely. "I almost think you wrong," she said. "From what I remember of his frequent fits of abstraction and gloom, I should think the subject troubles him, and why should it not you?"

"Because I love him, Miss Aldeane. I love him. I should love him still, if he was proved to have sprung from the lowest of mankind. And what difference is it what he has been, now that he is so highly respected? I, for one, am satisfied. I love him."

After some further conversation, Aldeane left the room, thinking deeply upon all she had heard, in connection with the handsome, yet weird-looking man, who had so completely won the love and confidence of Leonore Arendell. That she, so light hearted and gay, could even have conceived a liking for him, was to her incomprehensible; but as she had herself said, he seemed to rule both her mind and heart. She prayed that it might be for good and happiness; but her heart was oppressed by many sad misgivings, which she tried in vain to overcome.

Preparations were quietly made for the wedding. The sewing-room was constantly open, and seamstresses were busily employed upon piles of silks and linens, laces and embroideries, over which the bride elect kept anxious watch. Aldeane was often called in to admire some finished article, or to be consulted with upon some important point.

The music lessons were short, for Leonore objected to practicing. "She would do so when she had more leisure, for George loved music;" but now the piano was given up entirely to Jessie; and thus after school-hours Aldeane enjoyed full leisure, which she spent with her books or the family, for she dreaded nothing so much as long or frequent companionship with her own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD ARBOR AT GRASSMERE.

THE time passed quickly and busily, and the day set for Mr. Raymond's arrival was at hand. Aldeane owned to herself no slight curiosity to see him once more, and to learn from his appearance whether she had the same cause for heart depression that she had noticed in him three years before. In the day of his coming, there seemed every omen of good, and Aldeane called herself weak enough to be encouraged by it, to entertain more hopeful feelings concerning the future of her pupil than had before been hers. The sky was cloudless, and rested, a canopy of azure brightness over the green earth. The soft and breezy air was redolent with the perfumes of the flowers of May. Aldeane received this as an omen of good. Nature, at least, seemed propitious. She would not have had the day dark and dreary on which he was to appear, who was to take the sunshine from their Southern bower, to smile upon the snows of the North. Yet a foreboding of evil, faint yet lasting, saddened her heart. Leonore, on the contrary, seemed devoid of all apprehension. After completing her afternoon toilet, she entered Aldeane's room, exclaiming: "Look, Miss Allie! will George be ashamed of me, think you?"

She wore a light blue dress, of some delicate fabric. It was cut low on the white shoulders, which were half covered by a profusion of brown ringlets, which fell back from her joyous face, revealing the low white forehead, the gentle brown eyes, the rounded cheeks, flushed with

excitement, and the full pouting lips, which were parted by a smile, disclosing the tiny white teeth behind them. Aldeane took a spray of tea-roses from a vase, and twining it amid her curls, said:—

“Unless Mr. Raymond has very bad taste, which I don’t believe, he can not fail to love you better than ever, Nora.”

“Only half an hour more!” returned Leonore, “and he will be here. I told Uncle Adam to drive fast; besides, papa will hurry him.”

She took a seat at the window, whence she often glanced up the road. At last she exclaimed fretfully: “Oh! will they ever come? This half hour is longer than the whole week has been! How slow they are!”

“Have patience, Leonore.”

“Oh! here they come! here they come!” she exclaimed a moment later, leaning out of the window. “They are away up the road.” She arose and ran to the door, her face beaming with joyful anticipation. “No, I won’t go down till they call me,” she said, retreating slowly to the window. “Yes! I will though; you know he will think me cruel!” and yielding to her inclinations, she ran down-stairs, just as the carriage stopped before the gate.

Aldeane turned to the window. Colonel Arendell alighted from the carriage, and Mr. Raymond sprang quickly after him. She looked at him for a moment with curiosity. The features, the olive complexion, the dark eyes, the majestic form she had known, were all there, but the fierce, stern expression was gone. His face was lighted up by a look of impatient love and joy, such as she had supposed him incapable of wearing. Leonore ran down the path to meet him. As if she was a child he lifted her in his arms and kissed her, his dark face resting upon her fair cheeks, while he whispered words that caused them to mantle with blushes and smiles.

They came up to the porch, where Aldeane could no longer see them, but she heard Mrs. Arendell welcome him, and his reply, delivered in a rich, musical voice. Leonore asked many questions. "How long he had been on his journey; whether Annie was well, and when he had last seen Uncle Fred?" Aldeane listened intently for his answer.

"I saw him in New York as I came through. You know Mrs. Morgan is never very strong, but she was as well as usual. Fred's health was quite poor, though he insisted upon it that he never was better in his life."

"Ah! dear!" said Mrs. Arendell "I think he must have caught cold on his return North; but he is so obstinate—altogether refusing and disdaining medical advice, when any one can see that he needs it badly."

Aldeane heard them enter the parlor, and the dull hum of conversation, and at last in Leonore's loudest tones, the question:

"Where is Aldeane? Zettie, ask Miss Guthrie to come here."

She left her room, and met the girl upon the stairs. "I am going down, Zettie," she said, as she began her message; and passing on, in a moment stood at the parlor door.

Mr. Raymond sat near a large window, opening upon the garden, which sloped gently down to the river. His eyes were fixed upon it, as if it were a haunt of his childhood, or the realization of a dream. Jessie was sitting upon his knee, looking furtively up at his face, while Eddie stood bashfully a little behind him, and Frank at the window, eagerly describing the fine sport to be found in the woods, a little farther up the river. Leonore was leaning upon the piano, her face beaming with animated smiles. Not wishing to break in upon this happy scene, Aldeane was about softly to retreat, when Leonore observed her, and springing forward, caught her hand, and led her into

the room, saying, "This is Miss Aldeane, that you have heard me speak of so often, Mr. Raymond."

He lifted his eyes to her face with an abstracted look, so like that he had worn of old, that it pained her inexpressibly, though it instantly fled as he recognized her.

To her at least it was quite a joyous meeting. He told her a thousand things of Arthur and Belle, which she was delighted to hear, but even when he was most vivacious, that pained look would return to his face, as if his greatest art in that time and place, could not keep it at bay.

He seemed charmed with the beauty and artlessness of little Jessie, and soon her timidity departing, she sat more at ease upon his knee, and laughed and chatted gayly, leaning her bright, curly head against him, and toying delightedly with a magnificent diamond ring which was upon his finger. Aldeane was struck with the similarity of the beauty of the little child's face, to that of the man looking down upon her. He was darker, his features were more clearly defined, but the expression of the two faces was the same. She looked at them for some time, then turning to Leonore she said in a low voice: "Don't you think Jessie resembles Mr. Raymond."

"I was just thinking of the same thing, but thought that it must be a delusion. Strange, is it not?"

Jessie at that moment slipped from Mr. Raymond's arms and ran from the room. Rising, he said, "Play for me, Leonore, something lively."

She sat down to the piano saying: "Don't scold, but indeed I have not practiced any since I came home."

"Ah! that is too bad. And why haven't you?"

"I have been so busy," she replied, a brighter tinge of color rising to her cheeks as she commenced a lively waltz. He smiled proudly, and turning to a side-table on which were some miniatures, took up one and opened it, but started as his eye fell upon the portrait. He, however, continued to gaze at it, and Aldeane saw the expression

of his likeness steal over his face and flash from his eyes.

Jessie came in with a kitten in her arms, to which she called his attention. Aldeane looked at the two faces again; the resemblance was gone, not a trace of it remained. "Twas all fancy!" she thought. "They are not at all alike." Mr. Raymond bent down, and taking the kitten from Jessie, commenced in an absent manner to stroke its fur against the grain, while the little animal scratched and struggled to get free.

"Oh, Mr. Raymond! Mr. Raymond!" cried Jessie, standing on tip-toe, and clasping his arm, "give me my pussy, you're a-hurting her!"

He looked at the cat, as if for the first time conscious that it was in his arms, then giving her to Jessie, with a smile, which he strove to make pleasant, but which was indeed acrid, said: "That is the way we stroke Canadian cats, Jessie, but yours don't seem to like it."

Jessie looked at him with an expression of indignant incredulity, and walked slowly from the room, distinctly telling Frank, who stood in the doorway, that "Mr. Raymond was right mean! a heap meaner than any one she ever saw before." He laughed at this candid opinion, but the gloomy expression did not wholly pass away, even when Leonore spoke to him. Although greatly modified, the fierce look still gleamed like smothered fire from his eyes, and rested on his lips. That there was some mystery, some hidden reason for its appearance, Aldeane was confident. This strange man interested and fascinated her; but it was the fascination of dread, for she truly and deeply feared him.

Later in the evening, while standing at the parlor window, she saw him and Leonore walking in the garden, by the river-side. She looked almost diminutive beside him. His arm was thrown lightly over her shoulders, while she looked into the dark, handsome face bending over

her, with a trusting, loving gaze. They were in animated conversation, and at this happy moment all traces of the mysterious mood that had stamped his features with the glare of passion, was gone. Aldeane admired him, yet trembled for the fair young creature at his side.

Aunt Roxy was standing at the other window. "Yes, he's de bery libin' image!" she said, in a low, decided tone, "de bery libin' image!"

"Of whom?" inquired Aldeane, in surprise.

"Dat ain't any business to any body on dis plantation, not meanin' any offense to you, marm. But I jes' know Samiry must see him! dat's all." And with a significant shake of the head, Aunt Roxy turned from the room, leaving Aldeane in a state of great perplexity.

During the evening she could not join heartily in the merry conversation and laughter in which the others engaged; for her thoughts were busy, vainly endeavoring to find some clew to the mystery that seemingly enshrouded Mr. Raymond. Once, while standing near the door, she heard voices on the portico. Aunt Roxy said, firmly:

"You kin believe it or not, Massa John, but if he don't look a heap like him, may I be whipped for a lazy nigger!"

"Don't be so foolish, Roxy! There's not a particle of resemblance! Don't let me hear another word about it, and remember, on your peril, speak of this to any other person. Now, begone, and let me hear no more of this nonsense!"

Aldeane had never heard Colonel Arendell speak so sternly to Roxy before, and was positive that some strong emotion had actuated him to do so now. She turned, as if to seek an explanation from Mr. Raymond. He was standing near her, and had evidently heard all that had passed, and thought it referred to him. His face was pale, and his eyes shone with a basilisk light, like those of a vengeful, cowering tiger. His gaze fell upon her, and

he approached her, his countenance assuming its wonted appearance. He addressed her upon some indifferent subject, and a few moments passed in desultory conversation. His remarks were brilliant and pointed, and, to the quick perceptions of his companion, revealed a mind of giant strength, and an unconquerable will and energy, which sometimes broke through his calm exterior, in the fierce glances she had so often seen, and in caustic words that involuntarily mingled with the choice language in which he spoke. He was to her a perfect enigma, chaining her attention, commanding her admiration, yet filling her with a vague feeling of terror; not so much when in his presence, as when she thought of him, as she constantly did, in the solitude of her chamber, or through the dull hours of her study in the school-room.

Mr. Raymond had been at Arendell House two days, when, at the breakfast table, he remarked, "Colonel Arendell, you have another estate—Grassmere, I believe you call it. I should like to see it. Is it far from here?"

"Some ten miles only," returned the colonel, "and if you like we will go there to-morrow. It is a beautiful place in the spring of the year."

Mr. Raymond looked at him searchingly. "Then why do you not live there?" he inquired.

"Ah!" he muttered, "I don't like it! I don't like it! It is too full of bitter recollections ever to be pleasant to me! But I want to go there. Will you go to-morrow?"

"Certainly, with pleasure," replied Mr. Raymond.

"You need not think that you are going alone," exclaimed Leonore; "we will make a party, and all go, children and all!"

"Yes, children and all!" repeated Frank. "'Twould be a pity to leave Ed. and Jessie by themselves."

They all laughed. "Yes, young man, of ten summers, we will all go," said Mrs. Arendell, "provided that you

will attend to your books to-day, and give Miss Guthrie no cause for complaint."

These terms were joyously acceded to, and they ran away to the school-room, where Eddie soon got into disgrace by upsetting an ink-bottle, and Jessie cried dolorously over her dress, which was bespattered with the sable fluid.

Notwithstanding this, they all assembled the next morning to go to Grassmere, and never perhaps had a happier party passed through the beautiful pine-woods that lay between the two plantations. Leonore, Aldeane, and Mr. Raymond were on horseback, and therefore, perhaps, as they were separated from the merry children, any sadness or preoccupation in either of them was instantly seen; and in Mr. Raymond at times there was noticed a degree of preoccupation which to Aldeane was unaccountable.

On his arrival at Grassmere, he did not immediately dismount, but remained at the gate, surveying the place with an intense gaze of admiration and delight, mingled with some deeper feeling not so easily read. But soon the dark cloud, that so often rested upon his features, stole over them, deepening as he apparently became lost in profound reverie. He was aroused by Colonel Arendell's inquiry, "What do you think of the place, Raymond?"

He started, as if from a dream, answering confusedly, "It is beautiful, charming. You see I forgot every thing else in contemplating it. Can I give it higher praise?"

At that moment, Aunt Samira, who had been busy with Mrs. Arendell, looked at him.

"The Lord have mercy!" she exclaimed, raising her hands as if to ward off an apparition, her face turning a sickly terror-stricken hue, "the Lord have mercy!"

Mr. Raymond looked at her with a peculiar expression of surprise and alarm.

"What is the matter with the woman?" he asked testily, as he dismounted and passed her.

"I don't know," replied the colonel. "She is subject to such fits, I believe. Come into the house, and don't mind her."

Mr. Raymond obeyed. Aunt Samira gazed after him eagerly, then uttering a low cry of distress, rushed into the kitchen, muttering, "I know 'tain't him! I see 'tain't him! but he's mighty like! mighty like!"

This little incident seemed to throw a slight shadow over all, especially Aldeane, who wearied herself with vain conjectures concerning their strange guest, and the mystery by which, at least to her, he was surrounded. They soon separated into couples, for a walk through the grounds. As they approached the trumpet-vine arbor, Mr. Raymond stopped before it, exclaiming:—

"This is the place!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Colonel Arendell, nervously.

"I have dreamed of this place many times," replied Mr. Raymond, "yet it scarcely seemed so dilapidated. Yes," he continued, pointing to the decaying logs that protruded from the dense mass of foliage, "I have seen this often in my visions. It is a place to be remembered, so peculiar is its wild beauty. Why do you preserve it? Is there a story connected with it?"

"Yes; a sad one!" returned the colonel, turning aside hastily. "Come away; the vines around it are poisonous, and doubly so to me. I can not breathe their odors!"

He seemed much excited. But unheeding his words, Mr. Raymond entered the bower, seating himself upon the moldering bench within, and looking sorrowfully around him. At last he arose and joined the group at the entrance, saying, with a mournful smile:—

"Now we will go! This is a place to awaken sad recollections."

"It seems fraught with terrors to some people," said Leonore, "but I love its decaying beauty; while papa thinks it the gloomiest place on the whole plantation."

"It is," said the colonel, decidedly, yet sadly. "Come into the gardens; we can find something there more to the taste of all."

"Lots of strawberries!" lisped Jessie.

They laughed, and entered the gardens, where they found Frank and Eddie trampling down the vines, in their eagerness to gather a handful of ripe fruit for their mother before the others came.

They were called from the gardens by the announcement of dinner. After partaking of it, Colonel Arendell showed Mr. Raymond over the house. He seemed deeply interested by all he saw, lingering longest in the most modern-furnished rooms, especially in the library, where the family had gathered. After looking over several of the books that were on the shelves, he took down one containing the records of the plantation. Turning to the list of births, he commenced reading them, asking questions about them as he did so. Aunt Samira was in the room; she evidently had not fully recovered her equanimity, and often glanced furtively at Mr. Raymond, as he scanned the closely-written book. "Junius," he said, at length. "Ah!" your child?" looking up at Aunt Samira.

"Yes, sir," she replied, her eyes overflowing with tears.

"Yes, sir, he was my child!"

"Ah! the only one?" he pursued.

"Yes, sir."

"Dead, I suppose!"

"The Lord only knows, sir!" she cried piteously, as she ran from the room, her apron pressed close to her face.

Mr. Raymond did not seem to heed her emotions, but turned over the pages of the book. Frank was leaning

on the back of the chair, looking over his shoulder. "See Eddie!" he cried, suddenly. "It tells here when our Abel was born."

"What has become of him?" asked Mr. Raymond, in a low voice.

"Poison spider bit him," replied Frank, sadly, at the remembrance of his favorite. "He died about a year ago. He is buried in the graveyard, near Loring. I'll show you the place, if you like."

"Ah! so some wept for him, poor fellow," said Mr. Raymond, with a sigh. "Yes, Frank, I should like to see it. We will go there some day."

"Dear George is so tender-hearted," whispered Leonore to Aldeane. "One can scarcely comprehend such gentleness under such a stern exterior."

Mr. Raymond shut the book, and replaced it upon the shelf, and, as Mrs. Arendell and Leonore were called from the room to some weighty consultation with Aunt Samira, he strolled into the garden, and soon disappeared among the thick shrubbery.

An irresistible impulse came upon Aldeane to rise and follow him, for she was convinced that he had been in that place before, and under far different circumstances. She was not conscious of any trivial and mean desire to learn his secret for the mere idle gratification of her own mind, but for the nobler reason that Leonore must, of necessity, be closely concerned therein; and because of that, she quickly resolved to seek and question him.

Without reasoning in any degree upon the probability of his being there, she turned her footsteps toward the ruined arbor, and when he heard her footsteps he was startled.

"My God!" he broke out passionately. "Have I, then, betrayed myself?"

"To no one, I think, but me," answered Aldeane, quietly. "But I was attracted by your gloomy abstraction,

long ago, to speculate upon your past, and of that I am certain you are not so ignorant as you would have us imagine, and that this place is connected with it. Mr. Raymond," she continued, earnestly, "I have no wish to pry into your affairs, or to learn any secret that may be in your keeping, but I entreat you to think whether that secret is a harmless one."

"To whom?" he asked, raising his keen eyes to hers, and as suddenly dropping them.

"To Leonore," she answered, readily.

He arose and paced the arbor hurriedly. "Upon my soul, I think it harmless to her. She will never know—" he cried at length. "Good God! Aldeane, if you knew my tale——" He broke off suddenly, and looked at her.

Could she ever forget the expression upon his face that day? A whole childhood of misery leapt into his face, and a long youth of brooding revenge. Aldeane Guthrie saw it, and shrank from it, and scarce knowing what she did, implored him to "pause ere it was too late!"

He stopped before her, suddenly. "Aldeane," he said, "no harm can come to Leonore, no harm to any one, I think," and then he laughed softly to himself, while she looked entreatingly at him. "But I have not treasured my revenge for years to forego it now. It will not fall on Leonore; she is dearer than my life to me."

"Whom then? Upon whom will it fall?" asked Aldeane, not in curiosity, but in terrible fear.

He paused a moment, and looked around him. "Listen, Aldeane," he said, in a low voice, "upon your enemy as well as mine."

Instinctively her lips formed the words, "Richard Blake."

He nodded, and resumed his pacing of the arbor. The drooping tendrils of the vine waved around him as he walked; and as their fiery blossoms touched him, Aldeane could not divest herself of the idea that they were ser-

pents coiling around him. So strong was the fancy upon her, that she begged him to be seated.

"Aldeane," he said, suddenly, not heeding for a moment her request, "years ago, when I saw you, I thought I would tell you my history. I suspected then that there were reasons why you should know it, and I suspect them more than ever now. In a few days I will give you a package, to be opened after my marriage—not till after my marriage." He gave her no opportunity to accept or refuse this trust, not even to utter an exclamation of surprise, but instantly left her, a prey to the most intense surprise, and the most poignant fears.

An hour passed, she knew not how, and then she was laughingly drawn from her retreat by Leonore and her lover, both of whom declared they had been searching for her everywhere, for they were to take tea, and go home immediately. As Aldeane followed them to the house, she wondered vaguely whether all that passed was not a dream, for from the time he left her in the arbor, until they reached Arendell House, not a shadow crossed Raymond's face, not a look of significance beamed from his eyes; he was as careless and gay as if no trouble ever had crossed his path, as if no gleam of vengeance lived in his soul, as if indeed he had not even the most trivial wrong to avenge.

But Aldeane was not the less fearful of him for that; she felt as if she must warn some one of him; yet of what? or, to whom could she speak? And with these distracting thoughts she one evening found a sealed packet upon her table, and laid it safely away, shuddering as she thought it contained a secret, which her honor forbade her to possess herself of, until, if it threatened evil to her darling, it would be too late to avert it. Yet she put it away, feeling herself powerless, and striving to hope, yet trembling ever with undefined alarms, she awaited the marriage day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VOICE IN THE STORM.

THE day before that appointed for the wedding was singularly calm and beautiful, and as the evening drew near, became exceedingly close and oppressive, so that one said to the other, that there was thunder in the air, and pointed almost with a sense of relief to the low hanging clouds, expressing hopes that they would open, and refresh the earth.

How very still it grew as the evening passed on, and every sound fell upon the air with startling distinctness. Colonel Arendell, Leonore, and Aldeane, were upon the porch, enjoying, with a certain admixture of awe—which is common enough to all before this spectacle of the elements kept at bay, the quiet and serenity which prevailed, and noticing with amusement the antics of a group of little negroes who were disporting themselves in the upper terrace of the garden, and most of whom were clustered around Hercules—a particularly small one—who was attempting to climb a tree which stood in the center of the grass-plot.

After watching them for some time, and when the little ducky had climbed like a squirrel into the topmost boughs of the tree, the colonel demanded suddenly, "What are you doing there?"

The boy dropped from the tree, as much like a dead squirrel, as he had ascended like a live one, and explained apologetically, "It's done been dry wedder, mass'r, a long

time, an' dey say dat de snake'll make it rain. I'm 'gwine to try it any way."

"There will be no need of the snake's aid, I think!" said Colonel Arendell, laughing. "We shall surely have a storm to night; this perfect calm is a true index of the tempest about to follow. Look at those clouds moving so rapidly; besides the wind is rising!"

"Oh, pa!" exclaimed Leonore in a frightened voice. "Oh, pa, do you think George will reach home before the storm comes on?"

"He may. But let me see, the roads are long and rough. I do not think he can. But you need not be frightened, he will most likely stay at Golding's to-night, and come early in the morning to claim his bride. I, for one, shall not expect him to-night."

Leonore looked gloomily at the clouds, which were fast rising thicker and blacker. Distant thunder too was soon heard muttering in defiant tones, and as the night gathered in, the whole sky became overcast. The stars withdrew themselves, and the gloom at intervals was dispelled by quick flashes of lightning, and then became more intense than before. They entered the house, but Leonore walked to the window, and tremblingly contemplated the scene without.

It soon became indeed terrific. The winds rushed angrily by, shaking the tall trees to their very roots, and lashing the river to a sheet of foam, which gleamed white and angrily through the surrounding darkness. Large drops of rain began to fall, and the lightning flashes each moment lighted up the arch of sable that overhung the earth. Affrighted she thought of Raymond riding alone in the thick woods, through the darkness and rising tempest.

Colonel and Mrs. Arendell felt no fears for his safety. They were confident that he had found a lodging for the night. But Leonore covered her face with her hands,

and crouching down by the window, wept like a frightened child, and trembled violently at every vivid flash of lightning, or loud peal of thunder. The rain fell in torrents; and although all had retired in alarm from the windows, they could plainly hear the river rising rapidly, and ever and anon a loud crash proclaimed the fall of some mighty denizen of the forest.

The negroes in affright had gathered in the hall and around the door. Aunt Samira was there, moving noiselessly about in her usual fashion.

"Be still, dere's nothin' to be 'fraid on!" she exclaimed to a little fellow who was crying lustily. "Dis house'll be safe enough I reckon, as long as any of us want to stay here."

"Aunt Samiry," said his mother, interfering in his behalf, "I guess you think 'kase you're 'gwine off to Canady, that you can crow ober de rest ob us. I hope you'll freeze el'ar through; we hain't got no use for ye here. But may be ye'll not get to go after all."

"Hush!" commanded Colonel Arendell, authoritatively. "Be silent, or go to the kitchen."

Leonore moaningly repeated the words, "Perhaps we'll not get to go after all!" covering her face with her hands, and rocking forward and back in strange, unconquerable terror.

A momentary cessation of the storm was followed by a terribly vivid flash of lightning, and a startling peal of thunder. A man's footstep was heard at that moment quickly and heavily crossing the piazza.

"It is George!" cried Leonore, rushing to the door, which had been quickly thrown open, and casting herself into the arms of the new-comer.

"It is Blake, Leonore!" said her father, taking her away. "For Heaven's sake, Richard, what brings you here to-night?"

The man still stood at the door—which some one had

closed—with his hand upon the knob, as if ready for flight. His face was ashy pale; his large black eyes were staring wild with fright; his hair and clothes were dripping with water; and his whole appearance indicated the extreme of mental excitement.

“Good God, Richard! what brought you here to-night?” repeated the colonel.

“The river has swept away the bridge, Colonel Arendell!” he replied, in terrified accents. “It has not done so in twenty years before. Do you not remember ’twas on the very night that Lucinda and I returned from R——, where we had been to advertise Junius? Colonel Arendell, I heard his voice in the storm to-night, crying, ‘Help, mother, help me!’ in just the same tones as he did that morning I whipped him so. Oh, my God! my God! I am certain that it was his voice. It came to me in a lull of the tempest, as if from a great distance.”

“It was his spirit; de boy is dead!” cried Aunt Samira, throwing herself upon the floor, with tears and lamentations. “De boy is dead!”

Mr. Blake turned whiter than before, while Aldeane, terrified beyond measure, inquired:—

“From what direction did the voice come, Mr. Blake? Quick! tell me.”

“It was from this. I came down to see if any of you had heard it. I heard it, shrill and clear, though it apparently came from a great distance. It was twice repeated; the last time very faintly. Doubtless I should not have heard it had not my senses been rendered acute by the first thrilling cry.”

“’Twas his spirit in de storm!” again shrieked Aunt Samira, rocking wildly to and fro.

Leonore had ceased to weep; and, lifting up her pale face, gazed wonderingly upon the strange scene before her. Aldeane, with a dark foreboding almost amounting to certainty, threw her arms around her, and drew her to

her bosom, as if to shield her from some impending calamity.

Colonel Arendell had turned deadly pale at Mr. Blake's announcement, and stood as if petrified with astonishment and terror. At last he said, slowly:—

"You were thinking of the occurrence of which you spoke. This storm recalled it. Your mind was excited. You thought you heard those words."

"I am sure that I heard them. My mind was wholly engaged in trying to quiet my little sister, who was much frightened. When I heard that voice, I recognized it immediately. I heard it twice, distinctly."

"Whose voice did you say it was?" inquired Mrs. Arendell, alarmed at the blanched faces of the colonel and Mr. Blake, and the violent crying of Samira.

"He fancies it was that of Samira's son, Junius, who ran away from me nearly twenty years ago," explained Colonel Arendell. Then turning to Mr. Blake, he said, somewhat hesitatingly, "You had been drinking too freely, perhaps, sir?"

"No, no!" replied Mr. Blake, shaking his head, and looking earnestly from one to the other of the startled group.

The negroes, with terrified looks, had gathered around Aunt Samira, muttering, "It was his ghost! De boy is dead!" and sundry other exclamations of terror.

Mr. Blake opened the door to go. A torrent of wind and rain swept in; a bright flash of lightning for a moment dispelled the darkness, and in another it was more impenetrable than before; then the door blew to with a force that shook the room.

"You will not venture out again to-night," said Mrs. Arendell, "stay with us. The trees are falling on every side. You would be killed before you could reach home."

Mr. Blake seated himself, gazing vacantly around the room as if bewildered. "Where is Mr. Raymond?" he inquired at last.

"He went to R. two days ago. He was expected home to-day; but the storm has detained him," replied Mrs. Arendell.

"Oh, Mr. Blake!" exclaimed Leonore; "do you think it is possible that George would venture through the woods in such a storm? Don't you think he would find shelter somewhere?"

"Try to comfort her," said Mrs. Arendell, in a low voice.

But he seemed in no mood to do so, for he said slowly:—

"I do not know."

"You are crazy!" said Colonel Arendell, impatiently. "That voice has taken away your senses. Of course, Raymond wouldn't be so wild and reckless as to attempt to reach here such a night as this. That cry, if it was not a deception of your imagination, must have emanated from some child caught in the storm. We do not believe in spirits, besides Samira's child is a man now, and would speak like one."

"'Twas his ghost!" murmured Aunt Roxy; "I 'spect 'tis at Grassmere now. Miss Alice comes dere, why shouldn't he?"

Colonel Arendell seemed greatly excited; and Mr. Blake grew paler, and more rigidly silent each moment.

"I can not account for it," he said at length, huskily. "But I am positive that I heard that child's voice, perfectly enunciating the words I have repeated."

"Leonore, this is exciting you! Come up-stairs with me," whispered Aldeane. Without a word the two passed out; the one calm, though filled with terrible forebodings; the other trembling with excitement, bewilderment, and fear.

"You must sleep with me to-night! I shall die if you leave me alone!" said Leonore, clinging to Aldeane.

"I will not leave you, dearest," was the quiet answer. "Do not tremble so, the storm rages less furiously than before."

She walked to the window, and looked out. All was wrapped in impenetrable darkness. She could see nothing, but she heard the wind howl higher and higher, then die almost away, only to begin again with redoubled fury. The rain was falling in torrents, the drops were comingled, forming a sheet of water. A lightning flash revealed the river, rolling furiously on at a few feet below the house. It was bearing on its bosom, trees and earth, and besides these debris of the land and forests, others more terrible to look upon; planks and beams, telling of homes destroyed by the ruthless powers of the water and air. It was indeed a terrific scene. The bridge was swept away, and a large pine-tree, which for years had stood near it, had fallen across the stream, and slightly turned it from its course. As Aldeane stood there, she was reminded of the magnificent lines of Goethe, and unconsciously repeated them.

"The night with mist is thick and black;
Hark, how the forests roar and crack!
The hooting owls affrighted fly.
Shivered fall the columns tall
Of the palaces of pine—
See the uniting boughs entwine,
The mighty trunks that bend and groan,
The hard roots grating on the stone!
Mingling confusedly and madly, all
Over each other are heaped in the fall,
And around the crags, so wet and foul,
The winds in fury hiss and howl!"

Then she thought of Raymond. Could it be possible that it was his voice Blake had heard in the storm; and if so, could it be—but no, she would not think it. Her horrible suspicion could not be true, and she again looked forth into the storm, praying that he was as safe from harm as they, wildly telling herself, that Leonore's lover must be upright and pure, yet thinking, thinking, thinking in

spite of herself, of what Raymond had said of Blake, and of the terror he had shown, what terror and remorse at the fancied sound of a voice he had heard as a boy's more than twenty years before.

She formed no plans then—she could not ; she thought only of Raymond's safety, and dimly also that she, upon the next morning would urge Colonel Arendell to learn the history of his proposed son-in-law, ere he yielded his precious daughter to his arms—that daughter so pure, so artless and lovely.

Thinking thus, Aldeane turned to look at her,—turned from the scene of destruction without, to behold one within, whose spiritual calm and loveliness presented a strange contrast, and at once calmed her perturbed mind and surcharged heart. Half disrobed, Leonore had cast herself down at the side of the bed ; her long dark curls fell like a curtain around her ; her face was buried in the snowy counterpane ; her hands were clasped above her brow ; and her whole form was trembling with the violence of her emotion. She was praying earnestly. Wrestling in her feebleness with the mighty God that rules the tempest, arousing and quieting it at will.

Long she prayed. Occasionally in her earnestness partial sentences would fall aloud from her lips. Still the storm continued ; when she arose from her knees with a tranquil expression upon her beautiful face.

"Aldeane," she said, "I know that George has been in this storm. I have been praying to God to preserve him. Perhaps I have not been too late."

"God grant that you have not," she replied, gazing upon her very sorrowfully.

Leonore seemed comforted, and when a few minutes later, she reclined in Aldeane's arms, she trembled less violently, although her heart beat quick and strong.

"Aldeane," she whispered, "to-morrow I shall see him, and he will laugh at my fears. You know, Allie,

if the voice that Mr. Blake heard had been an omen of evil to him and me, I should have heard it. Besides, he said it was a boy's voice, and George's is so strong and manly."

"It may be that Mr. Blake imagined that he heard the voice, Leonore." He spoke as if he had treated the boy badly at some time. Perhaps his conscience, aroused by this terrible storm, spoke in tones almost human to his cowardly soul."

"Perhaps so, but the tale to me was horrible. Oh, how dreadfully he looked!" and Leonore shuddered.

"Yes," replied Aldeane, sickening with the thoughts that arose within her. "Oh, that the morning would come!" was her soul's mute cry.

The clock slowly struck twelve. "I think the storm is abating," said Aldeane, shortly afterward.

Her supposition was correct. The wind howled less wildly, and the muttering thunder seemed at a great distance; the lightning too was less vivid, and soon ceased altogether to appear. The rain still fell heavily, and the rushing of the river was plainly heard.

"The storm is indeed passing," murmured Leonore, wearily. "Now I may rest a little. Surely George was not in it."

"Yes; sleep, darling, if you can," returned Aldeane, as cheerfully as she could speak. "You will have enough to pass through to-morrow, you know."

"Yes, if the company will be able to come," said Leonore, with a faint smile and blush.

"God grant that the bridegroom may come," thought Aldeane. But she answered not, but lay listening to the wind as it fled away to its home in the caverns of the earth, until all was still, save the pattering of the rain-drops, which now came slowly, the rushing of the river, and at last the quiet breathings that told that Leonore slept.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT THE WEDDING MORNING BROUGHT.

THROUGH the long weary night Aldeane slept not, but clasping Leonore in her arms, listened to the quieting of the tempest, and thought, anxiously, fearfully, of Raymond, longing for the morning. At last it came, clear and beautiful. Putting aside the white arms clinging so closely around her, she arose and approached the window. A scene of ruin and devastation met her view. Trees had been blown up by the roots; in many places the fences were all swept away, and the corn and cotton laid low. The river was full of the debris of bridges and embankments, which it was hurrying wildly on, or tossing upon its miry banks.

Quickly dressing, she hurried down to the piazza at the front of the house.

Every thing there was in a similar condition. The windows of the kitchens and some of the negro cabins, had been blown out, and lay shattered upon the ground; the carefully-tended garden, with its beautiful flowers and trees, appeared a waste of fallen shrubs and mangled trellises. Every thing seemed ruined. A single night had despoiled all the beauty it had taken years to bring to perfection.

Colonel Arendell soon joined her. He looked very pale and haggard, as if he had passed a sleepless night.

"You are up early, to mourn over this desolation I see," he said with a sigh.

"Yes," she answered musingly; "but even this desolation of the land is nothing to that of the heart."

"What do you mean, Aldeane?" he asked, turning suddenly toward her.

"Have you turned croaker too? I thought my own thoughts had tormented me enough, false prophets that they are."

"I meant nothing by my words, sir!" she replied, astonished by the vehemence of his words and manner. "You must pardon me, if I aroused unpleasant thoughts or recollections."

"Aldeane, my child," he answered sadly, tenderly pressing her hands in his own, "I have terrible thoughts sometimes. The boy that you heard Blake speak of last night, swore vengeance upon us all, for wrongs which I could not avert. God knows my slavery then was worse than his own. Oh, the iron—the adamantine shackles that I wore, and yet seemed to the world a free man. He burst his bonds. Death alone could sever mine. They are not severed now, that boy is one link of the horrid chain. True, I have never heard of him since he left us. I have sometimes thought he was dead, but Blake has always said that he would come back, and now believes that he is near us, and thus accounts for the voice, that he still persists he heard last night, and which haunts him yet. I confess, too, that it has alarmed me considerably. One's nerves are easily shaken during such a storm as we had last night."

"It was indeed terrible!" ejaculated Aldeane, walking to the end of the porch, and shading her eyes with her hand. "Who are those coming up from the river, Colonel Arendell?"

He went to her side, both turned pale, and looked, from the group of men bearing a heavy weight between them, to each other apprehensively.

"It is a dead body—a man, I believe, Aldeane!" whis-

pered the colonel, his lips white with dread. "My God! who can it be?"

The men were now at the gate, and unclosing it entered slowly and silently. Colonel Arendell walked down to meet them.

One of the men, stepping forward, pulled off his hat, and said:—

"A gentleman, sir, was found drowned in the river just above here, and as this was the nearest place we brought him here. He is dreadfully beaten and bruised, and looks as if he had been washed from a great distance. Would you like to look at him, sir?"

"Presently. Who is it?" replied the colonel, turning toward the house, with a strange feeling of oppression and loathing, dreading to look toward the corpse.

The men again raised the burden, which they had placed upon the ground, and slowly approached the house. Mr. Blake and Mrs. Arendell had joined Aldeane upon the piazza; they were all evidently much agitated by the occurrence. Mr. Blake went down the steps and asked in a husky voice:—

"Do any of you know who it is?"

"He is a stranger to all of us, sir," said one. "I think I have seen the man, but he is so bruised as to be almost unrecognizable."

The men placed the corpse upon the steps. And at one glance, and with a scream of anguish, Aldeane beheld the fulfillment of her most horrible fears.

George Raymond lay dead before her.

"It is Raymond! O God, it is Raymond!" shrieked Mrs. Arendell; while the colonel, with every feature and motion expressive of the utmost horror, lifted one of the arms dripping with water, then let it fall, covering his face with his hands, and groaning aloud.

Though greatly shocked, Mr. Blake retained his presence of mind.

"Carry the body into the parlor," he said to the men. "Miss Leonore must not see it."

"It is the gentleman to whom she was to have been married to-day," whispered one.

With blanched faces at the thought of the widowed maiden they lifted the corpse in their arms, carried it into the parlor, and laid it upon the sofa. All the negroes, with horror stamped upon each countenance, had by this time gathered around. Shrieks and lamentations began to arise, when, with her long curls flowing wildly back from her face, which rivaled her snowy wrapper in whiteness, Leonore rushed through the throng, and with a wild scream of despair, threw herself upon the mutilated body of Raymond.

"George, my darling, my husband!" she cried frantically, casting back the black hair, wringing with moisture, from his clammy brow, and gazing distractedly upon him. His face was almost purple; his long beard, mustache, and hair were matted closely together; his eyes were closed, and his jaw fallen. He had evidently struggled violently to the last, and had apparently been dead some time. His clothes were much torn, and covered with mud, as though he had been swept from a great distance, and tossed violently from the current to the banks, then back again. Leonore saw all this at a glance, and with another shriek, wilder far than the first, threw herself upon the body of her lover in a deathlike swoon.

Mr. Blake lifted her in his arms, and carried her through the group of lamenting negroes into the sitting-room. With the colonel and Mrs. Arendell, Aldeane still stood beside the corpse, wholly speechless with horror and grief. The right arm of the corpse fell heavily down from its side, the breast of his coat fell back, and from the pocket dropped a little book which fell open upon the floor.

Colonel Arendell stooped, and picked it up. It had

opened at the last entry made by the deceased. He glanced over it, his face congealing with horror as he comprehended the meaning of the sentences. It was but a few short lines, but in frenzied tones he cried:—

“My God, it is Junius! What! Wed my child! Great Heaven, can this be true!”

Mr. Blake, pale with excitement, sprang toward him, and snatching the book from his nerveless hand, read the paragraph in a loud and horrified voice:—

“The revenge that my soul for years has craved is at hand! Ah, John Arendell! Woe! woe! to thee! for in another day your slave Junius shall wed your daughter, and crush your fondest hopes. The end is at hand!”

“It is here!” cried the reader, pointing to the corpse. “His influence and power have ceased forever!” he thought, exultingly, “I have escaped his wrath. Retribution will never reach me!”

With a low groan Colonel Arendell had sunk upon a chair, as if bereft of his senses. His wife knelt beside him, striving by her tears and entreaties to arouse him from the stupor which seemed to have overwhelmed him.

“Junius, my son! my pretty boy!” cried Aunt Samira, casting herself down by the body. “It was your voice calling to me in the storm last night. My son! my son!”

Through all the horror impressed upon him by the scene around him, Mr. Blake felt a sort of wild joy at the death of his enemy. Approaching the corpse, he smoothed back the dripping hair, placed his hands over the whiskers and mustache, and said, in a low voice: “See, the likeness is perfect!”

“William!” cried Colonel Arendell, springing toward the corpse, but falling prostrate before it. His mind had given away before the repeated shocks given to it, and for some time he lay wholly unconscious.

“Mass’r William! Junius!” moaned Samira, kissing

the cold lips of her son. Some of the negroes bore her, struggling and shrieking, away to her cabin, and for a few moments Aldeane was left alone with all that remained of the unfortunate octoroon.

She thought, as she gazed upon him, of the suspicions that had thrust themselves upon her the night before, and which she had vainly striven to drive from her mind. They were all confirmed; she needed not to read his letter now; the worst she had suspected of the history of George Raymond was confirmed; and his history was ended; death had ended it before his terrible vengeance could be consummated.

One of the men, who had discovered the body, entered the room, but started back when he saw a lady there.

"Stay a moment," said Aldeane, and with a gesture of respect, the man took a step farther into the room. "Will you tell me how you found him, and where? poor fellow! poor fellow. Will you tell me all about it," she resumed, seating herself beside Raymond, and quietly adjusting his dripping hair.

"I found him about a mile up the river, miss. I had gone down to my corn-fields to see if possible how much harm the freshet had done. I went down pretty close to the river, and, floating among logs and brushwood, I discovered, to my horror, the body of a man. I could not get him out without assistance, so I ran to a neighbor's to obtain it. Soon a number of men were assembled upon the banks, and the gentleman quickly taken from the stream. Then arose the question, where he should be taken to. None of us recognized the gentleman, and felt unwilling to take him to our poor houses, and all coincided in the opinion that this was the best place to bring him. A portion of us accordingly came with the body to this place, while the rest went up the river to discover if possible the place of his death. They found it at Baring's Branch, near the bend, where it empties it-

self into the river. From the spurs upon his feet we knew that he had been riding, and unaware, or reckless of the danger, had forded the branch. It is a dreadful thing, miss. Even if he is a negro, he looks like a gentleman, and Arendell at that."

He looked at the dead man, then wistfully at Aldeane a moment. Then, as her white lips murmured, "Could you discover no more?" he continued:—

"The party from Baring's Branch have just returned, and report that a horse, supposed to be his, was found near the ford of the R—road. It had been washed down a short distance, and had struck upon a raft of trees that had almost blockaded the stream. The poor animal was dreadfully bruised and torn. No doubt it struggled for its life as hard as its master did for his, poor gentleman."

Some of the negroes had gathered near the open door, and checking their cries, listened with horror-struck faces to the man's words. As he ceased, they renewed their lamentations louder and wilder than before; only one or two seemed able to restrain themselves; Aunt Roxy was one. Taking Aldeane by the arm, she led her up-stairs to her own room, and gently closing the door, returned to the parlor, to the sad duty of preparing the corpse for the grave.

Frank, Eddie, and Jessie, had been kept by the servants away from the parlor, so they had not yet seen Raymond. When they knew that Aldeane was in her room, they rushed tumultuously in. Hurrying toward her, Jessie hid her face in her lap, and sobbed bitterly; Frank stopped before her, crying:—

"Is it true, Miss Aldeane, that Mr. Raymond was once a slave? Say, is it true?"

He was much excited; his eyes were dilated with astonishment and eagerness, and his whole frame quivered with excitement.

"Yes, Frank," returned Aldeane, very sorrowfully.

"He was once unjustly held as a slave, yet he was your own uncle's child."

"What! my cousin a slave?" he queried, turning slightly pale. "A slave! akin to me?" Then, with an expression of ineffable disgust, he said, "I am glad he is dead," in a bitter altogether un-childlike voice—"a slave, and marry *my sister!*"

He turned to leave the room, but before he reached the door, he stopped, and bursting into tears, sobbed out, "Leonore! poor sister Leonore! Miss Aldeane, this will kill her!"

These words seemed to arouse Eddie, who had been standing by Aldeane's side, crying silently and bitterly.

"Oh, Miss Aldeane, I believe she is already dead!" he cried, "she is lying in her room, so white and still."

Aldeane had dreaded to witness the agonizing scene which she knew would ensue upon Leonore's restoration to consciousness, and knowing that she was in good hands, had refrained from going to her. But now she feared that her absence would be noticed. She arose, and leaving the three weeping children together, passed into Leonore's room.

Zettie and another servant, with a physician, were there. Leonore had opened her eyes, and was regarding them with a vacant stare.

"We have just succeeded in bringing her to consciousness," whispered the doctor. "I am very glad you have come. Mrs. Arendell and Mr. Blake are with the colonel. The excitement through which he has passed has produced brain fever, and he is very delirious."

Aldeane heard this without much surprise or interest being awakened, her thoughts were too wholly engrossed by Leonore, who had raised herself upon her elbow, and was gazing with bewildered countenance upon the anxious faces of those around her.

"I fear for her reason," muttered the doctor.

Aldeane approached her, and took her hand. Leonore at that moment seemed to have a slight recollection of what had transpired, for clinging to her friend she cried in frenzied accents:—

“Tell me, tell me, Aldeane, what has happened! Ah! is it true that George! that George—” She gasped for breath.

Aldeane could make no reply. The attendants turned sobbing away, and the kind-hearted doctor, who had known and loved Leonore from her birth—groaned slightly.

Leonore looked wildly from face to face. “Ah, yes! I remember! I remember!” she shrieked at last. “Oh, his dear face was bruised, and his lips mangled so!” And with a wild scream she fell back upon the pillows and again became unconscious.

Through all the events of the morning, Aldeane had remained calm and tearless. The fountain of her tears seemed dried by the very intensity of her horror and grief; but now, when her womanly sympathies were most strongly aroused by the sight of Leonore’s sufferings, tears burst vehemently forth, streaming freely over her pale cheeks, and falling upon those paler still over which she bent.

A low moan of deep anguish, after a long period, heralded Leonore’s second return to consciousness. She seemed to be perfectly aware of all that had befallen her, for she partly arose and cried:—

“I must see him once more!”

And as they endeavored to restrain her, she struggled with them feebly, saying: “Let me go to him! I will see him again!”

“You shall soon, dearest,” said Aldeane, through her tears. “But wait a little while, you will be stronger then.”

Leonore looked at her for a moment wildly. Her eyes seemed burning and dry, but presently they became

humid, and with a gasping sob she threw her arms around Aldeane, and laying her face upon her bosom wept bitterly.

The doctor seemed much relieved at this exhibition of feeling. "There! there!" he said, "that is better!" Then to Aldeane. "I can leave her now with you, without immediate danger of her fainting again. I will go now to Colonel Arendell. I fear that he needs my services as much, if not more than his daughter."

Leonore wept for a long time, and Aldeane endeavored in vain to comfort her: not striving to repress her tears, but to produce a less spasmodic and more quiet flow. An old gentleman entered the room. It was the clergyman who was to have performed the marriage ceremony. Leonore cried bitterly as she recognized him. He seemed greatly affected, and whispered to Aldeane:—

"Leave her alone with me a few minutes. I would comfort her if possible. Jesus hath balm for every wound."

Aldeane arose, and motioning him to her chair, then beckoning to the servants to follow her, left the room.

In the hall she met Mr. Blake.

"I want to speak to you," he said. "No one else seems rational. Come into the library a moment, if you please."

She followed him into the designated apartment, and took a seat near the window. Mr. Blake remained standing, looking at her doubtfully.

"This is a very sad thing, Miss Aldeane," he said at last with a sigh.

She bowed assent.

"You see," he continued, "that I did hear his voice last night, although you all seemed incredulous at the time. Still to me it sounded like the voice of a child."

"It was probably the shrill tone of despair and the distance that gave it the well-remembered sound," replied

Aldeane. "You know a slight resemblance will awaken remembrances of things fraught with cruelty or injustice."

He colored deeply, and bit his lips nervously. "I wanted to speak to you about the funeral," he said, at length. "I am hesitating whether to have him buried in the grave-yard of the whites, or blacks."

Aldeane arose, a flush of indignation mantling her face. "You have nothing to do with the matter, I believe!" she said, hastily. "Mrs. Arendell will no doubt see that due honor is awarded to the remains of her daughter's betrothed husband."

"I did not mean to offend you, Miss Guthrie," answered Mr. Blake, humbly. "You know that my desire is altogether on the contrary." Aldeane started, impatiently. "But it seems that I can never hope to win your regard."

"That is true, sir; you, indeed, never can!" replied Aldeane, haughtily. "If this is all you have to say to me, I will go. Mrs. Arendell can, no doubt, be consulted concerning the burial of Mr. Raymond."

Mr. Blake sighed deeply, twirling his hat in his hands uneasily. Aldeane passed out, and in the hall met the clergyman, who had just left Leonore.

"How is Leonore, now, Mr. Aldery?" she asked.

"Calmer than when you left her, but still inconsolable. She screams, and appears ready to faint every time poor Raymond's name is mentioned. I suppose she knows nothing of his being of negro blood?"

"Nothing," answered Aldeane. "But I suppose it is all over the country before this—such news travels fast."

"Oh, yes! I heard it on my way here. You may imagine how I was shocked. I had been summoned to a place of joy, and found the habitation of mourning and desolation. I stationed a servant at each road, to intercept the wedding guests, if any should come. Several have been turned back, I believe."

"You are very thoughtful, Mr. Aldery."

"Do you know when the funeral will take place, Miss Guthrie?"

"To-morrow, I presume. Meanwhile, Mr. Aldery, I hope you will remain with us. We all need comfort."

"You have borne up wonderfully, Miss Guthrie," replied the minister, looking at her compassionately. "You are very pale, my child. Try now to obtain a little rest."

"I do not need it yet; how can I, when others are suffering so much more deeply, Mr. Aldery? I must go now and see to the servants. Mrs. Arendell is still with the colonel, I suppose."

The good minister turned away, with a sigh, and Aldeane proceeded to the kitchen, hoping to find Aunt Roxy there, but it was deserted, save by one little urchin, who was rolling upon the floor, grimacing horribly, and crying distractedly.

"Hereules, Hercules! what is the matter?" exclaimed Aldeane, shaking him by the arm. "For mercy's sake, child, tell me what is the matter?"

"Oh, I didn't go for to drownd Mass'r George. I didn't go for to drownd him!" he sobbed.

"Why! what do you mean? What had you to do with it?" demanded Aldeane, greatly mystified by the child's words.

"Oh, I hung up de snake in de tree to make it rain! but I only 'spected it to rain a leetle, jest 'nuff to make de corn grow. I never had no idee of its comin' so's to drownd Mass'r George!" And he burst into a fresh series of screams, grimaces, and contortions.

"Why, Hercules!" replied Aldeane, scarcely, even in her distress, able to repress a smile at his ludicrous appearance. "The snake didn't make it rain. You had nothing to do with it. God sent the tempest." After some time she succeeded in making the child believe this; then she left him and returned Leonore's room.

She found her still weeping hysterically. Her mother was with her, striving to impart consolation, while she needed it almost as much herself. She seemed nearly exhausted, and Aldeane for the first time remembered that they had tasted nothing for the day. Quickly leaving the room, she went down into the dining-room. The wedding breakfast, still untouched, was spread upon the table. Placing a plate of cold chicken and biscuits upon a salver, with a decanter of wine and some glasses, she took them up to Leonore's room.

Mrs. Arendell seemed very grateful to Aldeane for this thoughtfulness, and a glass of the genial wine gave new life to Leonore's flagging pulse.

"Aldeane," she said, entreatingly, "I must see him now; I can wait no longer."

Without a word, Aldeane passed her arm around her, and supported her down the stairs. At the parlor door they paused for a moment.

"Can you bear it?" whispered Aldeane.

"I must see him," murmured Leonore, laying her hand upon the knob of the door.

They went in. The room was deserted and darkened. Approaching the corpse, Leonore drew down the sheet that covered the face of the dead, looked at it with awful calmness for a few moments, then sinking upon her knees at his side, remained for some time in silent prayer. The aged clergyman, unperceived, had entered, and regarded her with a look of deep and tender solicitude.

"My daughter," he said, as Leonore arose from her knees, and bent over her dead lover, "my daughter, trust in God. Endeavor to become resigned to this great affliction, it may be the least of two evils that have been hanging over you."

Leonore made no reply, but drew the sheet farther down. Raymond's features had become more composed, and his face was less livid than when she had looked

upon him in the morning. They had arrayed him in a beautiful suit he had purposed to wear at his bridal. His hands were folded upon his breast, and a look of deep calmness had settled over him. Traces of violent passions were still visible upon his face, but they were very dim and seemed almost merged into perfect serenity.

"Yes," said Leonore, slowly, "this may indeed be the least of two evils. I might have forgotten the commandment, 'Make not unto yourself idols,' and with it my God. I can never forget now the hand that has smitten me."

"Still God will be merciful to you. Can you believe that?" asked the minister.

"Yes, Jesus lives," she returned with simple faith, in a voice that revealed to her listeners that all of comfort, or hope to her, was in the name of the Redeemer.

She looked again upon her lover. Something appeared to attract her attention. Bending down, she drew forth from the vest pocket a tiny gold circlet, the wedding ring. She threw herself upon the body with a moan of despair. Mr. Aldery raised her in his arms. She placed the ring upon her finger, kissing it and crying frantically. "I am his wife! I will stay with him. Let me die upon his bosom!" and she threw herself again upon her lover, kissing his cold lips eagerly, and calling his name in piercing tones.

With some difficulty, Mr. Aldery raised her up, and bore her away; while, unable longer to control her feelings, Aldeane sank into a chair, and cried aloud in her anguish.

The day passed very drearily. The negroes gathered in groups in the garden and cabins, and with awe-stricken voices talked of what had transpired, scarcely able to realize it.

Colonel Arendell was delirious all day, and talked

incoherently, and sometimes so loudly and wildly, that he was heard all over the house, arousing even Leonore, as she lay weeping and moaning in her chamber, from her deep grief, to a vague feeling of terror as she heard his loud ravings.

Aunt Samira was in one of the cabins almost insane in her wild grief, calling upon her former master to come back, and upon her dead son. The negroes listened with horror to her cries, then turned away, and left her alone to pour out her woe.

It had been arranged that the funeral should take place the next day. It was to be as private as possible. Mr. Blake undertook every thing connected with the interment, and, according to Mrs. Arendell's directions, all was done with propriety and elegance. Leonore was told when the burial would take place, and immediately signified her intention of accompanying the family, to witness the closing ceremonies of respect paid to her unfortunate lover.

Mrs. Arendell and Aldeane begged her to desist from her purpose, fearing that she would not be able to bear the last cruel separation; but she begged so earnestly and piteously to be allowed to be present, that her mother could not deny her the sad privilege.

After a night passed in tears and prayers. Leonore arose, and calmly arraying herself in mourning garments that had been hastily prepared, turned to Aldeane and said:—

“Let us go down now. I would see him once more, before strangers come to intrude upon my grief.”

Aldeane silently took her hand, and led her down into the parlor. Frank and Eddie were leaning over Raymond, who now reposed in a handsome coffin, placing flowers around him. They were well chosen. The mournful periwinkle and violet were all that they had gathered to place near him, whose life had been so fiercely

sad, and morbidly sensible to gloom and melancholy. Yet those flowers, like his disposition, possessed much sweetness, and though typical of sorrow and death, were also emblematical of faithfulness and beauty.

Jessie stood near the boys, half frightened at the sight of death. In her hand was clasped a single snowy wax-like flower. Leonore took it from her, and placing it over Raymond's heart, whispered: "Immortality."

Aldeane looked at her in surprise, as she bent to kiss the lips of her dead lover. She was perfectly calm and tearless. A deep sorrow seemed spread over her white face, and her eyes were full of agony and gloomy tenderness. She seemed to have wept until the crystal fountain was exhausted, and now calmly and despairingly awaited the end.

Soon, people who had come to the funeral—some from mere curiosity, others as friends of the family, and a few from pure sorrow—began to assemble, and congregating together, spoke in low whispers, which failed to arouse Leonore from the apathy into which she had fallen. She sat by the side of Raymond. One arm thrown across him, the other upraised, the hand covering her face. Mrs. Arendell came in with Mr. Aldery, and the services soon afterward commenced. They were short but impressive; and all the assemblage wept, save her whose grief was deepest. She still retained the same attitude, moving slightly when one after another came to take a last look at all that was mortal of George Raymond.

At last, Mr. Blake and some others approached to close the coffin, preparatory to removing it. Mr. Blake gently raised her arm, and, for the first time she uncovered her face, and looked up inquiringly. All were shocked at the change manifest in her countenance. It was of an ashen hue, and deep lines of blue covered her compressed lips, and lay around her mournful eyes. Her little hands, as they lay upon her black garments, appeared emaciated,

and lax with suffering. All looked upon her pityingly, but she regarded them not, but still looked up at Mr. Blake inquiringly, and with a slight aspect of reproach.

"We must take him away, Miss Nora," he whispered brokenly, at length.

She remained a moment as if stupefied, then bent over the corpse, and laying her head upon his bosom, closed her eyes, sighing deeply, while her lips moved as if in prayer. The good clergyman bent his head, and offered up an earnest and humble petition on behalf of the sufferer. The strength required seemed given to her; for, rising, she gazed upon the beloved face once more; then kissed his cold lips, and feebly motioned to them to proceed.

The coffin was soon screwed down, and the men were about to take it up, when Leonore stepped forward and softly adjusted the pall, and they passed out.

Rising, she was about to follow, when her strength forsook her, and she fell back in the arms of Frank and Aldeane in a deathlike swoon.

The carriages were returning from the grave when she again became conscious. Raising herself upon the pillow, she looked out, and said:—

"They have returned. All then is over. Raymond and my heart are buried together."

A short time afterward she arose and slowly and feebly walked into an adjoining room. Aldeane followed, wondering much what her motive could be. It soon became apparent. The wedding dress and paraphernalia lay upon the bed. Approaching it she sat down wearily and took the garments in her hands, passing them over the glistening satin and through the folds of rich lace.

A casket lay beside her. Opening it, she took from it a splendid set of diamonds—Raymond's gift. She clasped the bracelets on her arms, holding them up, and as the sunlight fell upon the sparkling gems, smiled almost

mockingly. Again unclasping them she replaced them in the casket; then silently folded each article of the wedding attire. When all was completed she packed them carefully away in a small black trunk, locked it, and turning to Aldeane gave her the key, saying:—

“When I die, Aldeane, and I know it will be soon, let me be buried in my wedding dress, for that will indeed be my happy nuptial-day. The diamonds I give to you. Wear them at your marriage, darling, in remembrance of me. The jewels of Heaven will shine brighter for me.”

Weeping, Aldeane murmured her promise.

“Now leave me alone a little while.”

Aldeane turned away, and went to her own room, and placed the key in a secret drawer of her writing-desk, then throwing herself upon the bed she wept, until tired nature claimed repose in sleep, while Leonore in solitude was entreating that heavenly strength and guidance which alone could enable her to live under the dire afflictions that had darkened her young life.

CHAPTER XXV.

A LONG AND FATEFUL TALE.

For several days after the terrible excitement produced by Raymond's death and burial, Aldeane felt but little curiosity to learn more of his life than that which had been so tragically revealed, but one day a few words from Mr. Blake caused her to remember that it was toward him Raymond's vengeance was directed, and also that he had insinuated that his story had been written for her perusal, because of some possible benefit it might one day be to her. Thinking of all this, she retired earlier than usual one evening, and although she was quite wearied out with much attendance upon Colonel Arendell, who for some days remained extremely ill, and with quiet devotion to Leonore, whom she saw with consternation gave evident tokens, not only of mental anguish, but of decided ill-health, she drew the curtains, locked the door, and taking the packet from its resting-place, seated herself for its perusal.

As was natural the packet aroused many painful recollections, and she shed many tears, and hesitated long ere she could break the seal, and even when that was done, the writing, albeit unusually large and clear, seemed dim and blurred to her vision, so that for some time she could scarcely trace even the divisions of the lines. When she had somewhat composed herself, she saw that the manuscript was without preface of any kind, and that it began abruptly thus :—

“Thirty years ago, Grassmere, the place now owned by

Colonel Arendell, was the property of his brother William.

"This brother was wild and extravagant, yet of an open, kind disposition, and generous to a fault. As such men usually are, he was beloved by all, and by all imposed upon. The place had been left to him by his father, free from debts, but did not remain so long after he obtained sole possession. He at last became deeply indebted to Colonel Arendell, whose wife it was said had endeavored to win his love, but failing, had received the addresses of John, and had at last married him. Be this as it may, she seemed to harbor no ill-feeling toward him, but on the contrary frequently urged her husband to loan him large sums, though she violently opposed his accommodating any one else in the slightest degree.

"William Arendell at this time owned two mulatto girls. One was exceedingly handsome, named Samira. It is of her alone I have need to speak. That woman, who still lives, and is known to you, bore to her master a son, the unhappy being who pens these lines to you."

Aldeane knew all this, yet she paused to think of all the misery this knowledge had caused the proud heart, now forever still, and then with an eager desire to learn more, she caught up the paper and continued:—

"Strange to say, my father owned me as his child—even loved me. I was like him, with the addition of a childish beauty perfectly remarkable, and which rapidly increased with my years. You may think this a strange thing for me to speak of, but it accounts for my father's love—not always under these circumstances a sequence to paternity—and also for some things which happened later.

"I was a happy child, a very happy child, until I became about six years old. My mother was virtually mistress of the plantation; and even the master of it, had he wished to do so, scarcely dared to cross me. I

remember now that the plantation was the scene of a thousand wild orgies, and that a great many of the least favored negroes mourned over them a great deal, and then suddenly disappeared, sacrifices to their master's extravagancies.

"At last there came a time when, for six months or more, scarcely a guest entered the house, and my father seemed a changed man. At the end of that time he entered my mother's cabin, took me on his knee, played with me a short time, and then suddenly kissing me, said, 'Samira, I am going to be married!'

"My mother threw herself into a chair, clasping her hands over her heart, as if to repress some violent emotion, but failing, wept passionately. My father looked at her sorrowfully. I struggled to get away from him, that I might go to comfort my mother, whose wild grief I could not comprehend; but he held me tightly, caressing me, and bidding me be still. My mother at last murmured brokenly:—

"'Ah! Mass'r William! what is to become of the boy, poor little June?'

"'Dry your tears, and listen to me, Samira,' he answered, laying his hand on her shoulder. She endeavored to do as he wished, and was soon apparently calm.

"'Junius must go North, and you with him,' were his next words.

"'And leave you forever?' she queried wildly, her love rising above all other feelings.

"'Yes. You know Samira, had I been able, had the laws allowed it, I would have married you. But, at any rate, our child shall be free.'

"'Yes. Just because you don't want your wife to see your son, and so send us away among strangers, where we will be scorned by everybody. I don't want to go! I wish I was dead, and Junius too!' she cried passionately.

“‘Samira,’ said her master sternly, ‘never speak to me in that manner again, remember that I am your master, though the father of your child. It is love for him, and a desire for your happiness alone, that prompts me to send you away.’

“‘You loved me once,’ she moaned.

“A dark flush passed over his face. ‘Yes, it is true,’ he replied, ‘but not as I love the lady that I am about to marry.’

“‘Yes. If I had been white and rich, I might have been mistress here, instead of tool and slave,’ she muttered bitterly.

“‘Perhaps so! But this lady is not rich, she does not own even one slave.’

“‘Where does she live?’

“‘In —— county.’

“‘When are you going to be married?’

“‘Very soon—in about three months.’

“My mother covered her face, sobbing wildly. At last she lifted her head, and said, brokenly: ‘When must we go, Mass’r William?’

“‘Soon,’ he answered. Then looking at me, pressed me to his bosom, an expression of grief and pain passing over his face, as he laid it upon my clustering curls murmuring, ‘My poor little boy! my poor little boy!’

“‘I don’t want to go away, without you, papa,’ I said through my tears, for I had cried, since first witnessing my mother’s agitation, feeling intuitively that some great sorrow was about to fall upon us.

“‘There is time enough to talk about it,’ he replied. Lifting me off his knee, and glancing compassionately at my sorrow-stricken mother, he strode from the cabin.

“It soon became known to the rest of the slaves that the master was about to be married. I had never been a favorite on the plantation, as all knew that I was not a mere slave, and supposed that, at some time, I should

be emancipated and raised above them. I often received unkind words and looks, though seldom blows, for they feared my mother and their master too much to maltreat me. After this, however, their manner changed toward me. Pity took the place of envy, and solicitude of anger; for they supposed that we should be sent North—a word to them synonymous with utter wretchedness—to earn our living among un pitying strangers; or that I should be kept at home to be the special object of oppression and hatred of a proud and exacting mistress.

“Instead, then, of being hated by all, each seemed to pity me and my wretched mother, who seemed to dread separation from my father even worse than continued servitude in his presence, and at her old home, where many days of happiness had been passed, the remembrance of which even acute sorrow could not wholly obliterate.

“At last our master brought his bride home. Ah! how well I remember that day! All the slaves, save mother and myself, were dressed in holiday array. Their dread of a new mistress seemed forgotten, and they vied with each other in loud protestations of attachment and obedience. My poor mother remained alone in her little cabin, weeping over me, while I, terrified at her violent grief, remained quietly in her arms. As the sun was near its setting, I heard a carriage rolling heavily down the road, and rushed to the window, my mother forgetting me in a fresh paroxysm of grief. The carriage stopped at the gate, and I saw Mr. Arendell hand out a lady. I shouted, ‘Pa! pa has come!’ and was about to rush from the room. My mother sprang to the door and locked it, her face livid with watching and waiting. ‘Go back!’ she commanded. Trembling, I obeyed, and crouched in a seat by the window, following me she clasped my arm until I shrieked with pain.

“‘Ah! I forgot!’ she muttered, ‘I believe I shall go

mad. Listen to me, Junius. Never let me hear you call Mass'r William pa again, he is not your pa, and you must not call him so.'

"'Yes, he is,' I began. But she raised her hand with a passionate gesture, as if to strike, and with a cry of terror I shrank from her, and lay down, hiding my head in the pillows of my cot on which I had seated myself, and crying bitterly, watched her, as with a countenance pale with grief, and gradually becoming stony in its coldness, she moved noiselessly about the room. As the dark shadows of night fell darkly over us, rendering her almost indistinct, I fell asleep, with the first sorrow of my life pressing painfully upon my young heart.

"The next day, late in the afternoon, I ran from the cabin, in which my mother had kept me, fearing that her mistress would see me, and yet knowing that at some time she must, and hastening through the garden, soon reached the arbor, now so completely overrun by the wild trumpet-vine. It was then almost new, and very beautiful. Throwing myself upon the bench, I wondered for a long time why I could not see my father, and whether he had ceased to love me, and who the strange lady could be who had made my mother so unhappy, and why? I thought for a long time on these points, and I suppose fell asleep. I was awakened by a sweet voice, exclaiming in accents of surprise:—

"'Oh! William, what a beautiful child! Who is he?'

"'One of our—children.' He could not say slave.

"I opened my eyes, and beheld a very pretty young lady, small and fair, with a profusion of brown ringlets drooping over a face of peculiar beauty. She leaned upon the arm of Mr. Arendell, and was looking at me in a kind of delighted bewilderment. Not long however did I gaze on her; forgetting all my mother's commands, in my joy at again seeing my father, for he had been absent several days, I rushed toward him with a

shout of joy, exclaiming, 'Oh, pa! I'm so glad you're back!'

"Yielding to his first impulse, he clasped me in his arms, kissing me warmly. His wife looked from me to him in amazement. At last, in a voice half-choked with tears, she demanded: 'Whose child is that?'

"He placed me on the ground, a crimson flush passing over his face as he replied:—

"'It is the child of a young mulatto woman.'

"'And yours! and yours?' she asked, eagerly, not indignantly nor harshly, but very sadly and hopelessly, as if she had loved an idol, and sorrowed to find it clay.

"'Alice, you know I have not deceived you. Did I not tell you that my youth was spent wildly, recklessly; that I was not fit to marry one as pure and innocent as you are? Yes, Alice, that is my child, and, next to you, I love him.'

"She laid her hand upon his arm, looking up into his face with her gentle eyes. 'I do not wonder at it,' she said. 'He is a beautiful image of yourself. You spoke of follies, 'tis true, but I did not expect to find crimes.'

"'My Alice,' he exclaimed, in a tone of deep sorrow and surprise, 'Alice, can you reproach me so? Do you not remember that I have not wronged you by word or deed? and do not, even now, conceal the truth from you.'

"'It would be impossible to do so, William! But will you make a slave of your own child?' she added bitterly, 'or what will you do with him?'

"'Alice, you ask too much! I don't know what I shall do with him. Send him North, I presume; though 'twould break his mother's heart to leave the South. But of course I shall free him! Am I, then, so utterly depraved in your eyes, that you think I would hold my own flesh and blood in bondage?'

"'Men have done such things, and do them still,' she replied.

"He walked up and down excitedly. While she watched him, varying emotions of disdain, anger, and triumphing love, passed over her face. I was then, and am still, an enthusiastic admirer of beauty. As I looked upon her I forgot the scene I had witnessed; her stern questions and his strange replies, and catching her dress I exclaimed:—

"‘Oh! what a beautiful lady! where did pa— Mass’r William, get you?’"

"She glanced at me, and dropping on her knees, looked at me, as one might gaze on a brilliant jewel. ‘You are beautiful, and his child!’ she murmured. ‘I love him, and I can not scorn you.’"

"Mr. Arendell threw his arms around her. ‘My love, my own, then you will not trample upon that low-born child?’"

"‘No! no! his beauty conquers me! William, I forgive you, let him be the same as ever to you. I will try not to be jealous.’"

"Tears rose to her beautiful eyes, in spite of her attempted gayety, and with an inarticulate exclamation, she sprang from his embrace, and ran away to give vent to her grief and surprise in solitude.

"I remained with my father, asking him many questions concerning his wife. He replied to none, but bade me leave him. I did so, and looking back, caught a glimpse of his face, paler and more sorrowful than I ever saw it before, or for a long time after.

"From this time my mistress treated me very kindly, and at last really loved me. My mother soon loved, as much as she at first had hated and feared her, and became entirely reconciled to her who had so completely superseded her in her master’s affections. Three years passed, in quiet happiness to all at Grassmere. No children had come to open a new world of affection to the young wife, and strangely enough she showered

much of her love upon me, making me her constant attendant. She taught me to read; and being quick-witted and anxious to learn, I made great progress. I was soon able to read to her as she sewed. Ah! how many happy hours I have passed in her room at Grassmere, sitting at her feet, reading works that instructed as well as amused me! oftentimes interrupted by her sweet voice, explaining difficult passages, or laughing with me over some humorous scene. How much I learned to love her you can easily imagine.

"As I became old enough to feel the degradation of slavery, I longed to flee from it. To go, no difference where, so that I was unknown. The only drawback to this longing, was the grief I felt at leaving my mistress. The negroes, except my mother, Aunt Roxy, and her son Abel, I detested and despised, and would willingly have parted from them forever.

"Preparations were many times commenced for our departure for the North, but mother could never endure the thought of leaving her old home, so it was indefinitely postponed; and when I became about ten years old it seemed likely to be delayed forever.

"All was peace and serenity at Grassmere, when suddenly a terrible tempest swept over it, devastating its beauty and destroying all happiness forever. Of the nature of this calamity I shall not speak. It is a secret in the Arendell family, and I can not disclose it even to you. Suffice it to say, it took from our home its master, and from our hearts all peace and happiness. I shall never forget the day that the impending evil first became apparent to us. John Arendell came to Grassmere, and a scene of stormy recrimination and earnest denials took place in the trumpet-vine arbor. The brothers parted in anger, and to this day remain unreconciled.

"Oh! what darkness fell upon us that night! Darkness that rests over one in the grave, and upon my heart

to this day. I shudder as my thoughts turn to that dreadful time, and as quickly as possible I will pass over it.

"The last time I saw my master, he was a fugitive from the law—I will not say justice. My mistress, accompanied only by me, at midnight, led a horse to the edge of the woods below Grassmere, and there we bade him farewell; we did not think forever, but it was even so.

"I can not tell you all that we suffered at that time—not from bodily want or privation, but from deep bitterness of spirit. Mrs. Arendell, mother, and I, were to go to Cuba, where my master was to join us. Arrangements were made as speedily and quietly as possible. They were but partially made when my mistress's only child was born. Her sister came to her, to find her dying. Not many days elapsed ere the young mother died, leaving her helpless child in the care of her sister. This was my first great grief. I shall never forget the utter wretchedness of my heart as I gazed upon the corpse of my beautiful young mistress. I placed some white rosebuds—her favorite flowers—upon her fair bosom and within the pale, waxen hands, my heart swelling with the deep grief that neither expressed itself in words or tears. For some time I remained as if stupefied; so fully did I realize that my best and only powerful friend on earth was removed from me. Yet, even with the full sense of desolation resting upon me, I had no conception of the trials that awaited me. Perhaps it would have been better for me had they been fully revealed, for my body as well as spirit would then have sunk under it; I should have followed my beloved mistress, without further pain or suffering, to an early grave.

"The day of the funeral arrived. John Arendell and his wife came to Grassmere, and many neighbors flocked in—some with curiosity—all with sympathy depicted on their faces. In utter abandonment to my deep grief, I lay over rather than sat at the foot of the coffin. The

negroes, weeping loudly, were gathered around. I can not remember any thing of the services. I neither heard nor saw any thing. I was aroused from semi-unconsciousness by seeing some men approach to raise the coffin. The sister of the corpse bent down and kissed her, and with a wild cry of despair I rushed forward to look once more upon the dear face soon to be hidden from my gaze forever.

"Mrs. Arendell sat near me. Fixing her cold eyes upon me disdainfully, she turned to the servants, commanding them to 'Remove that child.'

"No one heeded her words: when, in a peremptory tone, she repeated them. The servant who came with them caught me in his arms and carried me, sobbing loudly, away. The fountain of tears was opened; a child's grief took the place of the passionate despair that had bound me. I begged to go to the grave, but was not permitted to, and long before the funeral train returned I had cried myself to sleep, only to awaken to deeper agony.

"John Arendell and his wife remained at Grassmere with their overseer, Richard Blake, to settle affairs with the sister of the deceased. A long conference took place in the library, and excited voices were heard contending loudly. The result of this was, that Miss Nellie—as the servants called her—took the child, declaring that as they wished to wrong her out of most of the property, they might take all; that her pure hands should never touch one cent of the money, and that she should not even bear the name of the Arendell family. All that we could glean was, that Colonel Arendell had bought large claims upon the estate, most of which my mother declared were false, for since his marriage, William Arendell had been exceedingly prudent and economical, and had paid nearly all his debts. Colonel Arendell seemed much excited during his stay at Grassmere. Mrs. Arendell and the overseer transacted all the business. Arendell was a

mere automaton in their hands. The negroes all liked, yet despised him, as much as they hated and feared his wife. They already felt the iron rod by which she ruled, and secretly rebelled against her unjust authority. Arendell was more a slave than any in his wife's hands, obeying her slightest caprice more in fear than love, even sinning deeply to gratify her avarice and love of power. She was a beautiful demon. Thank God, Leonore does not even resemble her in person, and, I trust, does not possess one of her vile propensities! She was avaricious, cruel, and unprincipled! What worse can be said of a woman?

"Miss Nellie left with the little orphan two days after the funeral, leaving her small fortune in the hands of Colonel Arendell, assuring him that it should never be claimed. I never saw or heard of either afterward, but I trust that they both prospered. God has promised to protect the good, and she was truly one of that class.

"The estate was soon settled, and immediate preparations were made for removing a part of the property to Arendell House.

"Mrs. Arendell wished to reside at Grassmere, as it was much handsomer than the house they then occupied, but the colonel combated this desire with unusual resolution and firmness. He seemed to have taken the greatest dislike to the place that had been the home of his childhood and youth. His mind was ever busy conjuring up the forms of those, whom he, an unwilling instrument in the hands of his wife, had wronged. As quickly as possible, he removed a part of the family, including my mother, Aunt Roxy, her son, and myself, to Arendell House, leaving the others to manage the farm and guard the property. A valuable and beautiful place was Grassmere at that time. With all its present beauty, it is but a wreck of its former self. The house is chilly and dark, with being always closed, and the grounds, but carelessly

looked after, are running wild, while the half-ruined arbors and houses, with their garnitures of untamed luxuriance, show plainly that partial dissolution reigns where all was once order and cheerfulness.

"No sooner were we settled at Arendell House, than the hatred of its mistress toward me became apparent. You know how such women love; passionately, unscrupulously; so had she loved my father, but when she discovered that this love was rejected, she hated him, and all belonging to him, as passionately and unscrupulously. As his child, I was forced to bear all the weight of her malice, and it was very, very heavy.

"Aldeane, I can not tell you what I suffered from that woman; the memory of whom I would fain cast from me forever, so utterly do I abhor it. I need not relate the horrible manner in which she continually persecuted me. She made me perform the most menial offices, and, under pain of the lash, forbade me to read any thing whatever, hoping thus to break my spirit, humble my pride, and cause me to forget all that I had learned. In neither did she succeed; in secret I satisfied my yearning for knowledge. I thought long and earnestly over many plans of escape from bondage, but lacked sufficient resolution to put them in practice. I felt far superior to all that surrounded me, and supposed that if I could reach my father, he would acknowledge me as his son, and by his love and care, reward me for all that I suffered at the hands of my cruel mistress. Her conduct laid the foundation of that firmness, and pride, which have ever been prominent traits in my character.

"Sometimes Colonel Arendell faintly pleaded for me, but a word or a look silenced him, and with a deep sigh and a remorseful look, he would turn away, leaving me helpless in the hands of my tormentors.

"At first I know that he wished to set me free, as my father had intended to do, but his wife would listen to no

such proposal. She preferred to keep me to vent her spite and malice upon, and fully she did it. One can scarcely conceive of a woman so fierce, so persevering in her hatred as she was. Her black eyes would glow with fury when I approached her, and her white hand ring upon my quivering flesh. But I will not sicken you further, but pass on to an event that shaped all my future.

"Mrs. Arendell possessed an elegant diamond ring; for some reason she valued it above all her jewels. When I had been with her some three years she lost it. She was usually very careful, yet sometimes she would leave money and valuables on her table, and none had ever been missed before. Negroes will usually thief, and those owned by Colonel Arendell were no better than others, but they feared to rob her, and though others of the family suffered, she was safe from depredation.

"Consternation seized on all, when it became known that this ring was lost; search was made in every conceivable place, but it could not be found. Mrs. Arendell declared that she believed it to be stolen, and that the culprit, if discovered, should receive a severe whipping. I trembled, lest I should be suspected, and knew that, although I was innocent, I could not prove myself to be. With the rest, I searched with the greatest anxiety for the missing jewel, but all in vain, not a sign of it was to be discovered.

"The day after the ring was lost, Blake came to me as I was working in the field, and ordered me to go to my mistress's room. I conjectured immediately for what, and my heart sank within me. I knew that I was to be branded as a thief, and I cared more for the disgrace than the terrible punishment that was certain to follow. My first impulse was to fly; but I remembered that that would be useless, and only turn appearances against me. So, wiping my soiled hands, and putting on my jacket, I

walked boldly to the house, and to Mrs. Arendell's apartments. I knocked at the door; it was opened by Colonel Arendell, who was evidently greatly troubled and excited. His wife sat near the window, sewing on some delicate fabric, with an energy quite unnecessary. Her face was flushed with anger, and her form trembled with the passion she vainly endeavored to suppress. I went in and stood near the table in the center of the room, twirling my cap in my hand, waiting patiently and fearlessly for her to address me.

"The colonel looked at me sadly. 'Junius,' he began, 'I am very sorry——.'

"'John,' interrupted his wife, 'you put me out of all patience! Sorry for him, indeed! A nigger has no reputation to lose, and a thief does not deserve one, at any rate!'

"I had not been conscious of any fear before this; if any had agitated me it fled at that moment. I stood upright and demanded, in a loud voice, 'Do you accuse me of stealing your diamond ring, madam?'

"She actually quailed under the look with which I regarded her. 'I not only accuse you of it, but I know that you did it,' she replied. 'So, give it to me now and your punishment may be less severe than if you persist in retaining it.'

"'You know that I haven't got it, Miss Lucinda,' I answered, in a voice I endeavored to render calm, while it trembled with passion, 'you know it well.'

"'Don't speak to me in that manner, nor look at me so impudently!' she screamed, working herself into a violent passion.

"Colonel Arendell began to say something in my behalf. 'Do you forget that he is the son of a miscreant, and that he is a slave?' she demanded, fiercely. 'Leave the room; 'twill neither do him nor you any good for you to remain; he shall not escape me!'

"Like an abject coward he obeyed her, cut to the quick by her unfeeling remark, but lacking strength to resent it; and so I was left alone with my unjust accuser.

"For some moments we remained silent. While I gathered strength for the conflict that I knew was coming, I watched the dark changes that passed rapidly over her countenance. I knew that I should obtain no mercy, and therefore hoped for none. Calmly, and with a firm resolve to avenge myself, though, of course, I formed no idea in what way, I waited for her to speak. Not long did she keep me in suspense; she laid her white hand heavily upon my shoulder, and hissed rather than said:—

"Where is that ring? I know that you have it! Where is it? Speak!"

"I will not say again that I haven't it,' I replied, doggedly, 'for you know that I spoke the truth when I denied it a minute ago. But why do you accuse me?"

"Because I left it in this room the day before yesterday. It lay upon that table,' pointing to one near the window. 'You saw it lying there, and stole it. Slave, I am positive of it.'

"Slave' was the name she always gave to me, as being expressive of utter worthlessness and degradation. 'I did come into this room with water, as you ordered me to,' I replied, steadily, meeting her look of hatred and contempt with one as keen and bitter, 'but I did not notice the ring, and so, of course, did not take it. I shall say no more.'

"Aldeane, I can not repeat the language in which that woman accused and denounced me. At last, placing her hands upon my shoulders, and looking down into my face, she cried passionately:—

"You are like your father, slave! and I hate you as much as I do him! Yes, yes! I hate you!"

"I know it,' I answered, mockingly, 'and all because

he would not marry you! He would rather have married my mother than you!"

"She turned deadly pale, but fury blazed from her eyes. Springing up, she snatched up a small dagger that lay upon the bureau, and threw herself upon me with the fury of a tigress. I felt the cold blade pierce my arm; then, with a powerful effort, threw her from me, and rushed from the room, the door of which closed loudly behind me. Before she could reach me I jumped from the porch, and was running swiftly toward the negro quarters, when Blake seized me, exclaiming:—

"Not quite so fast! not quite so fast!"

"I struggled to get free, but he was a young, stalwart man, and held me fast. One of the negroes, at his command, brought a rope, and I was soon, panting with rage and exertion, bound hand and foot. I was taken away to an out-house and chained—yes, chained down.

"My mother, in agony, looked upon me, but I heeded neither her entreating looks or tears, but fought impotently with those that bound me, while they laughed at my blind passion. 'Your blood is flowing now,' said Blake, pointing to the stream that trickled from my shoulder. 'I'll get a new whip, and let you feel the weight of it to-morrow. 'Twill draw a little more, perhaps! and cool your temper a little.'

"I remained for many hours thus chained. I threw myself upon the floor, and, looking at the manacles upon my wrists and ankles, inwardly resolved that when those bonds were loosed all others should be also. I swore that I would be free. Those who looked in upon me wondered at my calmness; they could not see the tempest raging in my heart, and the fiery thoughts busy in my brain. Not a sigh or a tear escaped me; a new strength animated me. I was conscious that a new era of my life was at hand; and trusting and believing that it would herald freedom, I calmly awaited it.

“Night came in. Mrs. Arendell had looked in upon me with triumph, her cruel eyes glittering fiendishly, and with her detested image fresh in my mind, I lay, maturing plans for the future. About midnight I heard footsteps cautiously approaching the house. I shuddered, for I feared that it was my mistress or one of her minions, and with a thrill of joy, I discovered that my fears were unfounded. Little Abel had stolen to me in the darkness, and kneeling beside was sobbing in my breast. As I felt his wet cheek pressed to mine, I almost forgot my resolution to bear all with stoical indifference. The tears rose to my eyes, but I forced them back and begged him to be calm. He soon became so, and told me all I wished to know concerning the feelings of the negroes toward me. Nearly all believed me innocent of the charge under which I suffered. My mother could not come to see me, but Abel had begged to be allowed to do so. He brought me some bread, meat, and an apple. I had not eaten since early morning, but had not been conscious of either hunger or thirst; at sight of food I felt overcome by both. There was a spring at a short distance, and I begged Abel to get me some water; he did so, and I believe nothing so refreshing and invigorating ever passed my lips.

“I soon sent Abel away, fearing that he would be found with me. He left me, crying bitterly, while still deeper anguish crept into my heart at the thought that I should soon be separated from this faithful, though young sharer of my afflictions. I felt that even for the sake of my kindred I could no longer endure my thralldom, imbittered as it was by the hatred of an evil and designing woman.

“The early dawn found me exhausted with thought and watching, yet strong in my resolve to bear my last punishment with fortitude, and then to be a slave no longer. For some hours after daylight broke, I was left alone. No one came near me, and I began to think that they had forgotten me, when Mr. Blake, with two negro men, my

most malignant enemies, entered. I still sat upon the ground, and did not even look up when they approached me. Blake ordered me to rise. I did so, and he poured upon me the vilest abuse, hoping to excite my ire. But although my heart burnt like coals of fire, and I longed to turn upon and rend him, I restrained myself and suffered him to lead me away to the place of punishment. I spoke not a word, and Blake cursed me for my silence. As we passed by the kitchens, many of the servants looked at me compassionately, while some laughed glee-fully at my discomfiture. My mother was there. She looked at me—and never shall I forget the look of horror and wildness in her eyes. They led me on until we came to the oak-tree, under which I found you standing this afternoon. It was much smaller then. The colonel and Mrs. Arendell were standing there, the former pale with anxiety, the latter exultant in her victory. As we approached, she came up to me, and striking me with the palm of her hand, exclaimed:—

“We will teach you to steal, slave! Tell me now where that ring is?”

“My cheek burned more with indignation than the force of the blow. My passion was too great to admit of speech.

“Blake tied my hands so tightly that the cords cut my flesh. My wrists were as white and delicate as yours, Aldeane, and those cruel bonds raised purple welts upon them, seeing which, Colonel Arendell loosened them, and whispered, ‘Junius be brave! I can not help you. I would if I could.’

“As he turned away, his breast heaving with a sigh, I said humbly, ‘Thank you, sir.’

“They thought it was because he had loosened my bonds, but instead, it was for the cheering, sympathetic words he had spoken. Mrs. Arendell frowned darkly, and ordered me to be tied up. I was stripped to the waist, and

then lashed to the tree. As Blake raised his heavy whip, to give the first blow, Colonel Arendell stepped forward exclaiming:—

“‘Stop! he shall not be whipped!’

“Mrs. Arendell turned toward him, white with passion, ‘You have nothing to do with that boy! You gave him to me. He is my slave, not yours!’

“He turned away, casting his eyes imploringly and sorrowfully upon me. I could not withstand that look, and cried, ‘Master John! I don’t blame you! Indeed, I don’t!’

“‘Strike, Mr. Blake!’ commanded Mrs. Arendell, and the lash fell heavily upon my shoulders. Just as he was about to repeat the blow, the overseer’s arm was seized by my mother, who with a shriek, sprang upon him almost overpowering him by the fury and suddenness of the attack. Recovering from the surprise occasioned by this unexpected interference, he raised the heavy whip, which she was attempting to wrest from him, and dealt her a furious blow. Mrs. Arendell endeavored to pull her away, and, with the butt-end of the whip, Blake again struck her; it was made of lead, and the blow stunned her. She fell at his feet, and he kicked her brutally, then dragged her out of the way, while I, for whom she had dared so much, was bound hand and foot, totally unable to defend her. I loved my mother devotedly, and at this sight my passion triumphed over reason. From very excess of rage, unable to speak, I foamed at the mouth, in my heart swearing vengeance, and pouring upon both mistress and overseer, and the cowardly master also, the most fearful imprecations.

“‘Richard, continue!’ exclaimed Mrs. Arendell, ‘You will have no interruption this time, I presume!’

“‘I guess not!’ he laughed, and turning toward me applied the whip ferociously. I felt the blood trickling slowly down my back. I heard the whiz of the lash as

it cleft the air; but above all, I remembered the low moan my mother had uttered as she sank beneath the blow of my persecutor. It rang in my ears, nerving me to bear that, under which, else, I certainly should have sunk. A shrill cry, that I could not repress, occasionally escaped me; and when the punishment ceased, from sheer exhaustion, from no will of my own, I was silent.

"Mrs. Arendell laid her hand upon my bare shoulder, and my flesh shrank from her touch. Every muscle contracted, so deep was the loathing that my whole being bore toward her. 'We have taught him submission, I think, Mr. Blake,' she said with a fiendish smile, and a viperish glitter in her cruel eyes.

"The overseer smiled savagely. Wiping the perspiration from his brow, he raised the whip as if to strike again, but a gleam of pity must have entered his heart, for the blow fell upon the empty air, and he commenced loosing me.

"My mother was again conscious, and slowly, as if just awakened from a painful dream, she rose from the ground and came toward me. The cold stony look crept into her eyes, and settled upon her face, that I had seen there the night my father brought his bride home.

"She did not scream or cry, when she saw the blood dripping from my wounds. A shudder ran through my frame; sick at heart, I leaned against her. She placed my shirt over my shoulders, and was about to lead me away, when Mrs. Arendell exclaimed peremptorily:—

"*'Samira, let the boy alone! we will manage him.'*

"My mother did not reply, but lifted me in her arms, her strength seemed renewed, but mine was entirely gone, and carried me away. Mrs. Arendell called upon Blake to prevent her, but he evidently considered it a dangerous task to confront that calm, yet deeply infuriated woman. So she carried me away to the negro quarters, and as I was laid upon a bed, a sharp, excruciating pain,

from my lacerated flesh, convulsed my frame, and overcome by my suffering mind as well as body, succumbed under this weight of exquisite agony, and I fainted, to awaken with all the horrors of delirium upon me.

"When I again became conscious it was night, a solitary candle flickered through the gloom of the apartment. My mother was bending over me, the look of cold despair still resting upon her; and my master stood at the foot of the bed. His arms were crossed over his breast, and his head was bent low. A sorrowful man did he look, as he gazed upon me.

"*'They have killed him, Mass'r John! they have killed him!'* were the first words I heard.

"A dim recollection of all that had passed swept over me. Reaching forth my hand I touched my mother's that lay upon the bed. She caught it with an exclamation of joy, and kissed me. Colonel Arendell came to the bedside and took my hand. With a shudder, I withdrew it.

"*'What! do you hate me, Junius?'* he asked. *'You know that I could not prevent this.'*

"*'I know that you are not master here,'* I replied, sarcastically, *'but you should be. I am your own brother's child! yet you stood by and saw them try to murder me. Yes! I do hate you! and my revenge shall be terrible!'*

"I was becoming fearfully excited. Colonel Arendell stood astounded at my words. My mother begged him to go away, and he complied, leaving me to exult over what should be, while he could but grieve over what had passed.

"I received some water from my mother's hand, then turned, and fell into a long and troubled sleep, from which I awoke in a violent fever, suffering excessively from my wounds. My faithful watcher was still beside me, striving to alleviate my pain. I lay in bed a week, as much overcome by mental as bodily suffering.

"During all that time I thought only of escape and revenge, but formed no plans to effect either. I was as yet too weak for connected thought. As soon, however, as I was able to leave my bed, my mind regained all its former strength, and I conceived and matured the plan that led to my escape from bondage.

"My mistress had found her ring in a desk, in which she had carelessly placed it; so I was free from the taint that had rested upon my character. I saw her once only after the day upon which I was punished. The ring was upon her hand. She drew it off when she saw me; and looking at me contemptuously, said:—

"‘So you didn’t steal this! It is well for you that you did not, or you should have another whipping—you are recovered enough now!’

"I did not reply, but merely looked at her.

"‘Ah! what dreadful eyes!’ she exclaimed, full of passion and fire! ‘Slave, you shall be sold. I will not keep you to haunt me with your glances.’

"She went into the house and I never saw her again, save in my dreams. But ah! she has haunted me then! She has walked like a specter through every vision of my life, keeping alive my hatred, and inciting my deepest and deadliest revenge.

"And this is the first part of my life."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CLOSE OF THE FATEFUL RECORD.

AFTER these words, there was a long blank in Raymond's manuscript, and Aldeane could readily imagine that he had paused long in painful thought before adding the few pages which still remained, and which she perused with eager attention. This portion began as abruptly as the first had done, and the first lines contained simply the words:—

“My escape!

“As I have said before, I quickly matured a plan for effecting this, and having revealed it to my mother, obtained from her all the sympathy, and what, as a boy, I felt to be far more important, all the aid she could in her circumstances possibly render me.

“I endeavored in vain to persuade her to go with me, but she would not. She feared pursuit, and would not impede my progress by her weakness. For myself I feared little. I was certain that Colonel Arendell would not pursue me, and scarcely supposed that my mistress would cause it to be done against his orders, as that would make her passionate temper and vile disposition public. As they owned no hounds, I had no apprehensions of being hunted down by them, and therefore contemplated a safe, though laborious escape. My mother declared that she would surely follow, but no arguments could induce her to accompany me. One dark night I bade my mother, Aunt Roxy, and Abel, good-bye! and started on my perilous journey. Abel cried so piteously,

that I turned back, and could scarcely make up my mind to leave him; but, thrusting a much-treasured five cent piece into my hand, he pushed me away, saying: 'Go! go! but come back some day for little Abel!'

"'I will! I will, indeed!' I cried, and with another kiss to all, I left them, and fled through the darkness of the night, listening to the rushing of the wind through the trees, and to each sound of insect life, vainly striving to hush the voices in my heart that urged me to turn back to my loved ones, and to slavery.

"That word impelled me onward, and ere the daylight came, I was in the woods, farther from Arendell House than I had ever been before. I remained there hidden under a clump of hazel bushes, close by the side of a brook, satisfying my hunger with the food with which mother had scantily supplied me, and slaking my thirst with the water that flowed before me. At nightfall I again continued my journey, and at daybreak came in sight of what seemed to me then a very large town. It was R——; not a very large place, you know. Not wishing to be seen, I remained in the outskirts, at some distance from the houses. Although I was quite fair, and could easily have passed for a white, the idea of doing so never once occurred to me, and I felt the greatest trepidation if I chanced to meet any one, as I did once or twice. At the time of my escape it was the fall of the year—in October, sixteen years ago. The season was very rainy, consequently traveling on foot was doubly hazardous and fatiguing. I remained in the vicinity of R—— until dusk, then continued my flight. My supply of food had already become very small, and I knew not how to replenish it. The corn and fruit were gathered, so that I could not even get them to assist me, and I much feared starvation, either total or partial, before I should reach a place of safety.

"Happily, I knew considerable of geography, and deter-

mined to seek some sea-port. I first thought of Newbern—but remembered that some of Colonel Arendell's relations, whom I knew, resided there, and if they saw me I should probably be recognized. So I turned in another direction, setting my face in the direction of Norfolk.

"I knew that I must pass through a dense pine forest—and to my great delight, on the morning of the fifth day of my journey, I found myself there. On the day before I had knocked down a bird and satisfied myself with its half-cooked carcass, for I dared not make a large fire lest the smoke should rise above the tree-tops, and disclose my hiding-place. But there seemed to be no birds, or small animals in the piny woods—they had gone farther south—therefore, though I searched diligently, I could find nothing with which to appease my hunger. My bread was exhausted, and there seemed every prospect of starvation before me. I still traveled by night, for I feared that I might be discovered by some of the men who lived a solitary life, making turpentine. I was far from plantations, where I might have begged a morsel from the negroes, and there seemed nothing obtainable at the few rude cabins I passed, even if I had dared to make known my wants to the inmates.

"My courage was nearly exhausted; two days had I been in the woods and had eaten nothing. I had been walking all night, and just at daybreak came in sight of a small cabin. A woman was within busily engaged in getting breakfast. A tall, dirty-looking man, stood in the doorway, and a squalid child was crying on the floor.

"'Tis the last meal in the house, John. We've scarce enough to make a pone now!' I heard the woman say.

"'I can't help it! How can I get more? I must fell timber to-day. I ought to have been at work before this.'

"'Yes; if there's any walkin' to do you ha' plenty to do!' replied the woman in a surly tone 'but nary

hand's turn else. Nary bit of grain should we have to eat, if I was like you, you triflin' no-account critter.'

"The man seemed used to such language, for he did not reply, but gave a long, lean hound that passed him, a sounding kick, which elicited a fresh scream from the child, and a torrent of reproof and abuse from the woman. At last they sat down to breakfast, and as the sun began to show itself, though a veil of mist, for the swamp exhaled a constant vapor, almost impervious to its brightest rays, the man threw his ax over his shoulder, and walked away. I was about to enter the cabin, and beg food when I thought that the woman and child were preparing to leave it. I was right in my conjecture.

"The woman pulled the old sun-bonnet she wore still further over her face, threw a sack over one arm, and taking the child on the other, shut the door of the cabin, and to my infinite delight trudged away. She passed so close to me, that I could have touched her but I held my breath lest she should hear it, and watched her until she was lost to sight.

"As soon as I was certain that she was quite gone, I ran eagerly to the cabin, pushed open the door and entered. It was devoid of every comfort, and contained only the most necessary furniture, and that of the rudest description. I noticed nothing of this when I first went in, but went immediately to a small cupboard, that stood in the corner. There was a little corn bread and a slice of bacon upon the shelf. I eagerly ate a part, and thrust the rest into my pocket. I was very wet and cold, and uncovering the fire found a bed of glowing coals: placing thereon a few pine-knots that were scattered about the room, they soon produced a cheerful blaze. I sat down before it to warm and dry myself, and had partly succeeded, when I heard the sound of loud whistling; I raised my head, and saw the master of the house, his ax on his shoulder, leisurely approaching. My heart stood

still with terror. For a moment I could neither think or act. Then instinctively I rushed to the door, opposite that by which I had entered, sprang out, and ran through the woods, with the speed of a frightened deer, for over an hour, impelled by the fear of pursuit, translating every sound into a shout of an enemy, until at last I stumbled over some object, and fell on the ground, still faintly conscious, but without the power to rise or move. Soon I fell into a deep sleep, and did not wake until night. I was shivering with cold, and the noxious dew, that fell heavily. My first impulse was to continue my slumber, but a moment's thought convinced me that too much danger attended it; and I feared that too much time had been lost already. I looked up at the sky, it was clear and begemmed with stars, that cast a welcome light through the gloomy forest. I arose and slowly walked on, taking the direction I conceived to be opposite to that from which I came. I was very weary and at first could scarcely proceed. I, however, soon became more supple, and walked cheerfully on. At dawn I found myself on a large public road. I kept on it for about two hours, when looking back I saw a wagon at some distance behind me. I sprang into the woods, and hid behind a large tree. The wagon came on slowly; it contained a man and woman. When they came opposite me, she said to the man: 'How far are we from Portsmouth?'

"Notwithstanding the risk of discovery, I bent eagerly forward to hear the answer—"Only five miles!"

"Only five miles from Portsmouth! No words can describe my joy at hearing this. My heart swelled with delight; I leapt, and would have shouted, had I not remembered that I was still in jeopardy. I hurried on, still keeping in the woods, and retaining sight of the wagon, that I might not lose my way.

"As we approached the towns the country became more open, and with considerable trepidation I passed through

the suburbs, thinking that every person was looking at and would recognize me. I passed on unmolested, still following the wagon, that I had taken for my guide. It rolled slowly on, and at last turned into one of the principal streets, and stopped before a large house, which I afterward discovered to be the market. It was now about seven o'clock, one of the busiest hours of the day in that section of the city. I was struck with wonder at the crowd of people, the many strange things I saw, and the confusion that everywhere prevailed; and I trembled beneath the many curious glances thrown upon me. I do not wonder now that I attracted the attention of many; my clothes were tattered, my face thin and haggard, and my whole appearance extremely wretched.

"For some time I stood in a corner of the market-place, afraid to speak or move; soon, however, the cravings of hunger induced me to leave my place of partial concealment; and I went to a neighboring stand, and bought a meat pie; then returned and ate it eagerly.

"I was jostled roughly about by the men that were moving rapidly around me; and I became conscious that I could not stand much longer, so exhausted was I with the long walk I had taken the previous night, together with the exposure I had endured. So, with a faint heart I left the market, and wandered through the streets, turning from one to another, seeking refuge, that I might take the rest I so greatly required. I walked a long distance, and at last came to the beach. There were but few houses in sight, and a few boats fastened to the shore, and drifting with the tide, showed plainly that it was not much frequented. An old negro man was the only person near. He was opening oysters with great dexterity, and I watched him for a few minutes, with curiosity and admiration. He worked busily and for some time did not notice me. Some movement of mine, among the shells, that were scattered around, at last

attracted his attention. He raised his old cap from his head, and pushed it back, disclosing a line of white wool above his wrinkled forehead, and regarded me with a stare of surprise, and the single exclamation, 'Well! I 'clar for 't,' broke from his lips.

"I was frightened, and about to run from the place, when I remembered that it was not likely that he had ever seen me before, so I kept my ground, returning his gaze and attempting to smile in a cheerful manner. He seemed to appreciate the effort, and to regard it as an invitation to speak, for without removing his eyes from my face he inquired:—

"'Whar is ye from?'

"I hesitated a moment, then said, 'From North Carolina,—eastern part.'

"'Neber been dar,' said he, shaking his woolly head, and continuing his work. I was about to go away, when he looked at me searchingly, saying:—

"'You's a white boy, I 'spose?'

"The blood rushed over my face. I had not before thought of attempting to pass for white: now, I determined to do so, and steadily answered, 'Yes;,' adding laughing, 'what made you ask, uncle? Do I look like a nigger?' turning my face toward him a little proudly, for I knew I was white, and every one said handsome, though I appeared at slight advantage then.

"The old man seemed satisfied, and said: 'Don't be 'fended, dere's good niggers as well as white folks, but I didn't know but you might be one ob dese pesky white niggers.'

"'No! no!' I answered quickly, my cheeks burning with shame.

"'What did you leave home for, eh?'

"I thought a moment, then answered: 'My uncle treated me badly, and though I am all alone in the world, I won't be put down.'

"Dat's right, honey! dat's right!" replied the old man approvingly. "And is de man rich?"

"Yes, he owns a great many slaves."

"And more's de pity, chile! But ain't you rich too?" and he looked at me quizzically.

"My father was," I returned, "but his own brother robbed his heirs of all."

"You look pretty rough, anyhow!" was his comment.

"I guess you would too, if you had walked six nights, and hidden in the woods as many days!" I replied.

"What?" cried the old man, throwing down his knife, and looking at me in astonishment. "Well, if you've done dat ar, your uncle must have treated you worse'n anybody kin b'lieve! What's yer name?"

"Junius."

"Junius! well, hain't ye got no other name?"

"I thought a moment, then answered, 'Allen—Junius Allen,'"

"And your folks is rich?"

"Very," I returned, somewhat impatiently.

"Then ob course you is too," said the old man, musingly; "and been 'posed upon by yer uncle. He must be a big rascal, sartin! What are ye 'gwine to do here? got any idee?"

"Oh! I shan't stay here! I shall go North!" I replied quickly.

"What 'gwine dere for? got folks dar?"

"I hesitated a moment, then answered—'Yes.'"

"Rich, maybe?"

"Oh! yes. I believe some of them will help me! At any rate I shall find a refuge from my uncle. I'm afraid he will catch me if I stay here!"

"The old man's respect for me seemed to increase as I continued, especially when he was assured that my family were not 'poor white trash,' but owned a large number of slaves.

“Well! young mass'r!” he said at length, ‘I’m jest nothing but a poor nigger, but I’m free, and if you will come to my ole cabin, I shall be mighty glad to share all I’ve got wid ye.’

“This invitation I gladly accepted, and went home with him; but was so utterly exhausted that I could scarcely proceed. The old man pitied me much, and on our arrival at his cabin, introduced me to his wife, as ‘Young Mass’r Junius, who’s runned away cl’ar from North Carliny, from his ole rascal ob an uncle who’s cheated him out ob his slaves and eberv ting else.’

“I sat down by the fire, and took off my old shoes; the blood oozed from many a gaping crack, and I could scarcely bear the acute pain they gave me.

“The old couple seemed horrified. Uncle Dick, as he told me to call him, brought me warm water, and Aunt Betsy bathed my aching feet. Before she had finished, I fell asleep. When I awoke, I found myself in a comfortable bed, that, in my exhausted state, seemed a perfect elysium to me. The candles were lighted, and my entertainers were sitting at their evening meal. Some slight movement of mine attracted their attention, and Aunt Betsy came to my bedside.

“‘Is you ’wake honey?’ she whispered.

“‘Yes,’ I replied, turning toward her wearily. ‘But I’m so tired.’

“‘Just lie still, honey.’

“She went to the table, and presently returned with a cup of fragrant coffee, and some hot food. To me it seemed perfectly delicious, and after eating and drinking I lay down, and soon slept again.

“The sun was high in the heavens, when I again unclosed my eyes. Aunt Betsy was sitting by the fire, knitting. The room was in perfect order, and wore a cheerful and pleasant aspect. My clothes were upon a chair at the side of the bed, in a much more presentable

condition than when I had doffed them. I arose and dressed myself, feeling still very weary.

"Aunt Betsy was very inquisitive, and asked numerous questions, to all of which I replied as truthfully as possible, still, however, keeping to the tale I had told Dick. Her indignation knew no bounds at my account of my uncle's treatment, though I did not represent as nearly as bad as it really was, for I was too fearful of raising her suspicions.

"At noon Uncle Dick returned. He seemed pleased to find me up and well.

"'Spected you'd be sick,' was his first remark. Then, as he was eating dinner, he urged me to tell my story again; and though I was weary of repeating what was only partly true, I did so, and when I concluded, he asked:—

"'Whar do ye want to go to?'

"'New York,' I answered quickly. I had heard my father speak of that place, and a wild hope that I might find him there, entered my mind.

"'New York!' repeated Uncle Dick, musingly. 'Haven't got much money, I s'pose?'

"I took a little leathern bag from my bosom, and spread its contents upon the table before me. Two quarters of a dollar, a dime, three cents, and the half dime Abel had given me, were all that I possessed.

"'Can't pay for a passage, dat's sartin,' was his remark.

"'But I can work! I can work,' I interrupted eagerly.

"Uncle Dick laughed. 'Whar's de strength to come from?' he asked; 'besides, young gennelmen, as owns slaves, don't often work much.'

"'I will do any thing to get to New York,' I returned; but I felt as I spoke, that my strength, if taxed severely, would soon give way.

"'Stay in de house till I come back,' was Uncle Dick's

parting injunction. When he returned in the evening, he was accompanied by a tall, fine-looking white man.

“‘This is Jack Field,’ he said. ‘I’ve been tellin’ him ’bout you; he’s a sailor, and often goes to New York—perhaps he kin help ye some.’

“My heart leapt at the suggestion, and I exclaimed, ‘Oh, if he would! Oh, sir, can you help me to New York?’

“‘Well, you’re a nice-looking craft, anyhow, and if you was tugged out of harbor, would sail against any wind, I reckon.’

“I did not heed his evident admiration of my person, but asked again, ‘Will you help me, sir? I must go to New York!’

“‘And where’s your friends, when you do get there?’

“I hesitated a moment, then replied: ‘I don’t know exactly, but everybody will know them, they are so rich, and rich people are always well known.’

“Field laughed. ‘New York is a pretty large place, my lad; however you may find them when you get there. You’re willin’ to risk it, anyhow, are you?’

“‘Oh, yes, indeed!’

“‘Well, ’tis none of my business! Old man Dick, here, wants me to help you, and I like your face, and think I will; besides, I ran away from home myself, and know what it is to need a friend.’

“He then told us a long story about his early privations and struggles, and of his ultimate success in life, and then said, ‘What do you think of starting to-morrow, or will you wait till next time? ’twill only be two weeks.’

“‘I will go to-morrow by all means,’ I answered, quickly.

“‘All right, then. You must bring him aboard with the oysters to-morrow, Uncle Dick.’

“‘Sartin.’

“‘I’ll stow you away, somewhere. Come on board as if you merely came to help the old man unload. Don’t let anybody know that you intend to stay; for the skipper will tear around above a little, if he finds you while you’re on board.’

“‘I’ll be perfectly quiet, he sha’nt find me,’ I replied.

“Field shook hands with me; looked at me admiringly; muttered under his breath, ‘A reg’lar beauty, and no mistake,’ and walked away.

“My beauty served me a good turn, then. It interested the sailor in my behalf, and led to my quick removal to a free soil. For that reason, I speak candidly and thankfully of it, but without undue vanity, I thank God for the beauty so plentifully bestowed upon me in my childhood; it was the instrument of procuring for me all the happiness of my after life.

“Early the ensuing morning we went on board the schooner as Field had directed. He came forward to greet us. The oysters were soon unloaded, and Uncle Dick was ready to go. As he shook hands with me, tears glistened in his eyes, and he muttered, ‘I’ve l’arned to love ye mighty, young mass’r; I b’lieve you is a true boy, and will make a good man, de Lord prosper ye!’

“‘Come! come down here!’ said Field, ‘or some of the hands will see you!’ and he half forced me down the hatchway. I could merely utter the words, ‘Good-bye! I shall never forget you!’ and then lost sight of my humble old friend forever. Poor old man! his memory is a bright spot in those days of trial and suffering. But for him I might have perished, or, worse still, have been again returned to slavery; for the persecutors of slaves are always ready to pounce upon unfortunate runaways, and it is not probable that I could have long escaped them.

“The schooner was soon under weigh, and I was beginning to breathe more freely, with every movement that bore

us farther from the Southern coast. Field had not shown himself, even for a moment, and I had not seen any person else, as all were busy above me. I was becoming rather lonely when I saw a newspaper lying upon a bunk. I took it up, and read all the articles of interest that it contained, and was about to return it to its place, when an advertisement of a runaway slave caught my eye. I read it in the utmost alarm; every feeling of security vanished, and I again felt the hatred of my mistress in the degrading words:—

“‘Runaway—From Arendell House, — County, N. C., on the 20th day of October, my negro boy Junius. He is about thirteen years old, and very handsome. He is no doubt passing as a white boy. A liberal reward will be paid for any information of him. If apprehended, please lodge him in some jail, where I can get him.

“‘Mrs. J. C. ARENDELL.’

“My brain seemed on fire with excitement, as I read. Mrs. Arendell was still persecuting me; my master had not even given his sanction to this, for his name was not signed.

“‘Field has betrayed me! he is taking me to some port in North Carolina!’ was my first thought; and I leaped up madly. I looked at the date of the paper. It was that day’s issue; and I knew that Field could not have seen the advertisement, at least, before that morning, therefore in all likelihood I was safe. I hid the paper behind a chest, hoping that it would not be seen until the end of the voyage.

“When Field, and the rest of the sailors appeared, he introduced me as his cousin, who had persuaded him to take me to New York on a pleasure trip. I was heartily welcomed by all, and passed a week with them very pleasantly. During the voyage, my mind was actively engaged in forming plans for my future walk in life.

Not once did I think of becoming a sailor, although Field several times suggested it. I could not reconcile myself to the idea of constant association with such men as I saw around me; yet I knew not what else to do. I had no idea of New York, except that it was a much larger and handsomer place, than any I had yet seen. I supposed, however, that employment could be easily found, even by a stranger, and child, as I then was. Field shook his head doubtfully when I mentioned this, said nothing to discourage me, but asked:—

“‘Why not go to your relations?’

“I dared not own that I had none in the city. I felt too keenly the danger of arousing his suspicions; so I said no more upon the subject, hoping that in some way I should be able to gain a living. I confined my doubts and fears to my own breast, and endeavored to appear as cheerful as was possible, under the circumstances. There are times when gayety is assumed to hide feelings of deepest melancholy. So was it with me at this time. Though deeply harassed in mind, my companions saw no trace of it. My laugh was loud and frequent. I told all the humorous stories I had ever heard, or read, not more to amuse the sailors than to divert my own mind from the channel of doubt and perplexity in which it ceaselessly wandered. I longed, yet feared to reach my destination. I knew not what might befall me in the great and strange city. Therefore, it was with mingled feelings, that I at last heard that we were entering New York harbor. But all gloom vanished when I thought that in a few hours I should tread a free soil, loosed from the shackles of slavery.

“The schooner cast anchor at the landing-place, and remained there some hours, before I found courage to go on deck. Field came down to tell me that I could go ashore if I wished. As I had no baggage, I was soon ready, and bidding the little crew adieu, I stepped

with a trembling heart upon the land, and with a thrill of exultation, thought that ere long I might rise to distinction, among those who would scorn me, if they knew the story of my birth. I sent many kind messages to Uncle Dick and Aunt Betsy, and though I could send them nothing of value then, I said in my grateful heart, that they should be rewarded, at least in part, for what they had done. I could but press Field's hand in silence. The tears rising unbidden, blurred my sight, and prevented utterance.

"‘If you can not find your friends, lad,’ said he, at parting, ‘come back to the dock at night. New York is not the safest place in the world for a stranger to be in after dark; so come back if you can do no better. You’ll know the place again, I guess?’

"‘Oh yes, certainly, I shall! I guess you will see me again,’ I replied, as I left him, with the conviction that his invitation would surely be accepted. I walked on through the crowded streets near the river, seeing much that struck me with wonder and admiration. Although New York has grown immensely since the time of which I speak, it seemed to me then a perfect labyrinth of streets. I moved on, in amazement, through the streets and avenues, looking with admiration at the beautiful houses that arose on every hand. In the novelty of my surroundings the time passed unheeded, and I was much surprised when the gray shadows of evening closed suddenly around me. I was in the upper part of the city, far from the river; but in alarm, I set my face in the direction in which I supposed it lay. Very quickly the city became enshrouded in partial darkness, and the gleamings of the lamps, far removed from each other, gave it, in my eyes, only a more weird and ghostly aspect. The street in which I was, contained only dwelling-houses, and was almost deserted by pedestrians. My heart beat fast with terror. Where was I to find shelter for the night?

This was the one engrossing thought of my mind. I wandered aimlessly on, until at last, benumbed with cold, my limbs failed me, and I sank down upon a doorstep, the bitterest tears I ever shed in my life forcing their way down my cheeks. As I sat there sobbing out my heart's agony, I wished myself again in servitude, anywhere, rather than there alone in the great city, where loneliness is most keenly felt, and destitution the least pitied.

"I had been wandering since early morning, and had eaten nothing. Hunger now came with full force upon me; I was very cold too, and my frame shook painfully with every gust of wind that swept through the silent street. I put my hand in one of my pockets to get my money, thinking that I would try to walk a little farther, to get food and lodging for that one night at least. With a feeling of horror that I can not describe, I discovered that my little treasure was gone! gone! and I was alone, without knowledge, money, or friends. My tears ceased to flow from very excess of horror and grief. Oh! the hour of anguish that followed, when, shivering with cold, feeling the direst pangs of hunger and desolation, I sat upon the cold doorstep! I even moaned aloud in my distress; but though persons occasionally passed by, they did not seem to heed me. Snow had begun to fall in large white flakes, and as I watched them slowly descend they seemed devoid of all beauty, and I thought of them only as the chilly covering of the night that would rest upon me an inanimate corpse in the morning. At last, benumbed with cold, and very weary, I fell asleep, and dreamed of those I had left in bondage, and of her who had given to my life all its bitterness. I dreamed of revenge; then that I was again in the power of my hated mistress. Her hands were grasping me tightly, and I was struggling with her madly, when I awoke, to find a heavy hand upon my shoulder shaking me heartily. A glare of light fell over me, and the steps and pavement

upon which I lay, causing the snow—which had fallen to the depth of an inch—to glisten like silver.

“‘Come, my lad,’ said a voice, ‘this is a pretty cold bed—on such a night as this is, too.’

“I muttered something inarticulately, and endeavored to rise, but overcome with sleep and cold, sank back again. I was not permitted, however, to lie there. I heard the muttered words: ‘’Tis a bitter night—the boy will freeze!’ Then I was lifted in strong arms, and still half unconscious, carried into the place whence the bright light emanated. It was the hall of a large and handsome dwelling. Laying me down upon the rug at the foot of the stairs, my new-found friend shut the heavy door softy, and returned to my side.

“‘How ragged!’ he murmured; ‘but handsome enough to dress in velvet, and tread on flowers! I wonder who he is? A stranger here, I’ll warrant. He has a different look from boys upon town. What shall I do with him? There’ll be a pretty commotion if ’tis known that I’ve brought a poor lad like this into this aristocratic house. He can’t walk, that is certain. He is scarcely conscious. He is heavy, but I’ll carry him up myself. I like the face.’

“Stooping down, he lifted me in his arms, and carried me up-stairs into a dimly-lighted apartment, and laid me upon a sofa. He turned on the gas, and presently came back to me, and poured a little wine down my throat; its genial glow restored me fully to consciousness, and the warmth of the room animated my body. At the return of strength, I raised myself upon my elbow; my friend placed his hand upon my brow and gently forced me back again; my whole heart found vent in my first words: ‘You have saved my life, sir!’

“‘Perhaps so!’ he replied, a smile passing over his benevolent countenance, ‘but you must not talk now; but rise and sit in this chair a moment.’

"I obeyed him, but was so weak that I tottered rather than walked to the place designated. Fixing my eyes upon my friend, I watched him as he moved about the room.

"He was in the prime of life; a tall, muscular man, with a strikingly handsome face; his bright blue eyes shone with kindness, and every expression beamed with sympathy. I thought at the time that I had never seen such a beautiful countenance; and now I can truly say, I never knew one to fulfill so nearly my ideal of sympathy and manly grace. The light brown hair was sprinkled slightly with gray and clustered heavily over the square forehead, giving him an appearance of firmness almost stern. A smile of strange, womanly sweetness rested upon his lips, and seemed to linger in the calm eyes that he at length fixed upon me. He had busied himself in making a bed upon the sofa, and when the task was completed, said:—

"‘Come, you can rest here now, and talk in the morning.’

"A sweet dreamy sense of repose stole over me, as I sunk upon the soft cushions he had so comfortably arranged for me. Soon to my vision the objects upon which I gazed faded like shadows. The sound made by the gentleman as he moved about the room fell faintly upon my dulled ear, and at last with a consciousness of perfect security, I fell asleep.

"The bright sunlight was streaming into the apartment when I awoke, revealing splendors before, even by me, unthought of. A rich carpet of Tyrian dyes covered the floor, and curtains of heavy damask and cloudlike lace hung before the windows. The bureau and tables were of rosewood, marble-topped, and strewn with beautiful and costly articles. I was dazzled by the sight, so different from my ideal of beauty—Grassmere—that for some moments I could but gaze on all this magnifi-

cence, fearing to speak, lest it should prove a dream, and vanish at a word. My host was breakfasting, and also reading the morning paper, in which he was so deeply engaged that I was unnoticed. I was ashamed to put on my ragged and dirty clothes, but, as I had no others I did so, and went and stood timidly before the fire. My entertainer looked at me with a glance of interest and compassion, and rising from his chair motioned me to take it. I did so. He seated himself by the fire, placed his hands upon his knees, and for some time regarded me in silence.

“‘Who are you?’ he at last inquired abruptly.

“I was startled by the question, hesitated a moment, then told him my true name.

“‘Where did you come from?’

“‘North Carolina, sir.’

“‘Indeed! Why did you leave there! Tell me all about it.’

“I remained for some minutes silent, hesitating between truth and falsehood. I at first thought that I would answer his questions in the same manner that I had those of Uncle Dick, but I knew that I had a man of mind to deal with, one that could not readily be deceived; besides, I was deeply grateful to him for the kindness he had shown me. The snow lay thick in the streets, and upon the housetops, and I felt that, but for him, it might then have been my winding-sheet. I had sworn that no man should ever know the story of my birth, but him I could not deceive. So burying my face in my hands, for I felt, like a blighting curse, the stigma resting upon me, I told him all, in a few hurried sentences; then awaited with terror and despair my sentence, ‘to depart,’ for I felt that it would surely come, and that I should again become an outcast. I had tasted of warmth and comfort, only to drink the more deeply of utter destitution.

"I felt—I could not look at him—that he was exceedingly astonished, and was prepared for violent exclamations and denunciations—but not for the silence that followed my words. I looked up timidly, and saw him rise and pace the floor in deep thought. I watched him closely; not a movement or change of expression escaped my notice, but I could read nothing of my fate upon his calm features.

"‘Have you told me all the truth?’ he inquired, at last.

"‘Yes, sir, all.’

"‘Then I will not desert you!’

"How my heart throbbed at the words. A tide of tumultuous joy rushed over my soul, and I burst into tears, weeping silently for a time; then, in broken sentences strove to express my gratitude.

"‘We must do something to alter your appearance a little,’ he said, striving to silence me. ‘Here, go into the other room, and wash yourself, I will be back presently.’

"He seized his hat, hastily put on a heavy overcoat, and left the room. I went into the bath-room—that he had pointed out—astonished at all I saw, but obeyed his directions implicitly, and when my friend returned I greeted him, feeling intensely happy; mind as well as body invigorated by the bath in which I had so freely indulged.

"‘You will find a suit of clothes,’ he said, handing me a parcel.

"I opened it, and found every article necessary for a complete toilet. I was soon dressed, and surveyed myself with some pride in the large mirror. My suit of plain black fitting admirably, showing my figure to full advantage; and though my long curls fell over my broad white collar, they were smooth and glossy, and had lost much of their elfish appearance.

“ ‘They must be cut off!’ said my friend, as he glanced at me approvingly. ‘You will do then, I think. A few weeks will round your cheeks again, though they are very thin and sallow now. Come, what is your name? I have forgotten—we will go to a barber now.’

“ ‘In a few minutes we were upon the street. I could think of nothing but the events that had taken place since last I trod them. I had fallen into a deep reverie when my companion again asked, ‘What is your name? Did I not tell you that I had forgotten?’

“ ‘Oh, sir!’ I said, ‘do not remind me again that I have been a slave! Call me any thing you wish; but I can not longer bear the name that I so utterly abhor!’

“ ‘He seemed surprised at my vehemence. ‘Your wish shall be gratified,’ he replied, ‘it would be no longer safe for you to be known by your own name. You may take mine—it is Raymond—and place George before it if it suits you.’

“ ‘It will do excellently, sir!’

“ ‘Thus did I obtain the name that I am now known by. On our return to the boarding-house, he informed me that he was a merchant, residing in Toronto, was a bachelor and rich, and that he would educate and provide for me, if I would promise to remain with him, to comfort his old age. ‘Call me Uncle,’ he said in conclusion, ‘and treat me as a son should do, and I will prove a father to you.’

“ ‘I attempted to express my gratitude but only feebly succeeded. ‘I have met with so many kind friends,’ I at last exclaimed, ‘how dearly I wish that I could in some way reward them all, but my obligations to you can never be canceled!’

“ ‘Never mind that! your love and obedience are all I want. Some more substantial proof of your gratitude, might however be acceptable to some of your humbler friends.’

"I thought so too, but as I had nothing in my possession that I could give them, I said nothing. Mr. Raymond seemed weary, and said no more. I could not sleep during the whole night, so much was my mind engrossed by the fortune that had befallen me. I could scarcely credit my senses, all seemed so strange and improbable to me. The evidences of truth however, were not wanting, and with a spirit of exquisite happiness I greeted the light of morning. Immediately after breakfast Mr. Raymond opened his desk, placed some paper upon it, and bade me write a note to old Uncle Dick. 'And you may inclose this,' he said, giving me a paper. I opened it and found a check for five hundred dollars.

"'But, sir!' I exclaimed, in surprise, 'this is far too much—a fortune to them.'

"'Perhaps so, George, but not much to me. Make haste, I want to go down to the docks to find the little sloop you came in. We can send this letter by Field; it is not likely that he has sailed yet.'

"In a few minutes we were upon the street, and in a much shorter time than I could have thought possible, were by the river. Mr. Raymond's knowledge of shipping led us directly to the right spot, and we were soon upon the deck of the little vessel that had brought me from the land of slavery and degradation to that of freedom and prosperity. None of the crew recognized me. Even Field passed me by. I called his name; he knew my voice and looked at me in the greatest surprise.

"'This is the relative that I spoke of,' I said, pointing to Mr. Raymond. 'You see he took me in.'

"Mr. Raymond thanked him for bringing me, as if I was indeed a beloved relative. Recovering the power of speech, of which surprise had for a time bereft him, the honest sailor replied in broken exclamations of wonder and delight:—

"'The schooner will move off in a few moments,' he

presently exclaimed, as a loud call from the mate summoned him to his duty.

“Give this letter to Uncle Dick, and may God bless you forever, Field!” I said, shaking hands with him.

“Mr. Raymond performed the same ceremony, and I caught a glimpse of several large pieces of gold left in the sailor’s open palm. He whistled slightly, dropped the money piece by piece into his pocket, turned away at a second summons from the mate, saying, ‘I’ll drink your health with that, sir!’ and sprang into the rigging while we hastily left the vessel, and my friend Field forever. Although I have often wandered along the docks of New York, hoping to catch a glimpse of them, I have never done so; and perhaps long ere this both ship and sailor may have stranded on the dark shores of eternity.

“We remained in New York a week longer, and then Uncle Walter, as he bade me call him, took me to his beautiful home in Toronto. An old housekeeper and several servants formed his household. All seemed to have been in his service some time, for they were accustomed to anticipate all his wishes, and to perform them with alacrity, also to respect the many whims and eccentricities that his bachelor life had given him. In some way, the idea became prevalent that I was Mr. Raymond’s brother’s child, and was treated with the respect due to the nephew of so wealthy and worthy a citizen. A tutor was procured for me, and under his instruction I acquired an insight into the various branches of knowledge that constitute a classical education. For several years I was thus happily employed, and was as contented as the many wrongs which still remained unavenged would allow me to be. I had not forgotten my oaths of vengeance—and, after the novelty of my situation had worn away, I took a grim delight in picturing to myself how I would bring my persecutors in shame to the grave, while I would revel in the glorious delights of gratified

revenge. These thoughts never left me, but became dearer to me as I approached manhood. I seldom spoke of them to Uncle Walter, but gloated over them in secret, until they became a part of my very being. You will shudder, Aldeane, as you read this, and well you may, for this foul spot in my soul can never be cleansed until my vengeance is completed. It is already begun—the consummation is near. I know you would say that I am infatuated—led on by the Evil One! but I can not believe it to be so. Did not fate place directly in my way the object by which I could wreck my hatred, and point out the very quick in the heart of my adversary? By giving life to my own heart, I portion out a bitter existence to him. In this I exult. Yes! yes! I believe alone in the law—‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’

“Some three years ago my guardian died, leaving me his sole heir. I was overcome with grief at his death, and felt but little inclination for any species of pleasure. He had, however, arranged with the elder Mr. Morgan that I should make the grand tour with his son; and, therefore, when Frederic left for Europe I reluctantly accompanied him, and of course during our long association formed a friendship for him which materially lessened the desolation, if not the grief I felt at the loss of my guardian.

“But wherever I went, and whatever I did, my desire for revenge grew stronger with every breath I drew, and was unconsciously daily held before me by Morgan in his frequent conversation concerning the family of the man I hated, more especially by his encomiums upon the child of the hated Lucinda Arendell—the gentle Leonore. I said, then, in my heart, this shall be my revenge—she shall be my wife—and when I saw her a few months later at Morgan’s wedding, I swore it. Here I met my old master, his amiable wife, and lovely daughter. I laughed as I thought how I would torture his unsuspecting

heart ere he should again escape me. I would marry his daughter, and afterward disclose to him the whole truth. I reveled in the thought, and proceeded carefully toward its realization. I soon discovered that I possessed a sort of weird power over Leonore, and I wielded it rigidly, rejoicing to see her casting all the boundless wealth of her love upon me. I believed myself proof against all fascinations; what then was my surprise when I found that she had enthralled my heart, and that I loved her with all the deep passionate earnestness of my nature. A desperate struggle between love and hate followed—and love triumphed. I could forego all my cherished plans of vengeance, rather than give sorrow to one so perfect in every attribute of goodness and beauty as Leonore. I determined to remain no longer with her, lest my resolution should falter, or her affections be centered too deeply in me to be removed. I saw her cheeks pale, and her bosom heave tumultuously as I left her. I saw *her* grief, but she knew nothing of the despair that filled my own heart.

“I returned to Toronto; then, restless and despairing, sought relief again in travel. I went to New York, and almost the first persons I saw were those from whom I had fled. My destiny to me was plain—my vengeance was at any rate to be satisfied. Leonore was pale, and drooping: my presence gave a glow to her cheek and life to her heart. To leave her again would be worse than death to both. I could not tear myself away and see her die; for you have heard truth in these lines:

‘Alas! the love of woman, it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing.
For all of hers upon that die is thrown,
And if ’tis lost, life has no more to bring—
To her—but mockings of the past alone!’

“You know my story now. In marrying Leonore, I shall find that happiness that else I can never know. Her

presence will purify the plague-spot of my existence. I—in one word—shall be avenged. The father, who now glories in his beautiful daughter, and revels in fancied security, shall know that his rich and aristocratic son-in-law was once his despised slave. Leonore shall know nothing of this. He will not dare tell her, and the secret, aggravated by the sight of her happiness with me—with me—and the necessity that he shall be under of extending his hospitality and homage to me, shall gall and fret his life away.”

Thus, as abruptly as it had begun, ended the record of a life, which Aldeane had herself seen closed, without one aspiration, without one hope of vengeance realized. But alas, and alas! the retribution had come upon the enemies of the slave Junius, when it could give to him no glow of savage pleasure. “And, O God!” cried Aldeane, “when will this terrible retribution end?” and, with a vision before her of the stricken Leonore and her half-demented father, she bent her face upon her hands and wept bitterly.

And she did not see then, nor for months later, why Raymond had written this tale for her. But she was glad, amid all her grief, that he had written it, that he had given some excuse, however weak it might in reality be, for that deep plot which bade fair to render Arendell House as desolate as had been for years the mansion at Grassmere.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DROOPING FLOWER.

IMMEDIATELY after the funeral, Mr. Blake communicated the sad news of George Raymond's death to Mr. Pierce, the senior partner of the firm of which the deceased had been a member. As quickly as possible he replied in person to the message.

He seemed deeply to lament the early death of his friend—and though he was greatly shocked and surprised at the discovery of his plebeian birth, it seemed in no degree to lessen his regard for him. Colonel Arendell was by this time convalescent. He had been very near the grave, but was again raised to life, though it was feeble, and every slight excitement seemed almost to extinguish the flickering flame. He could not for a moment forget or forgive the revenge that Raymond was about to visit upon him. The condolence of friends irritated him severely—for he felt that his name would ever be used in connection with that of the renegade slave—who had thrown a stain upon it forever. It was indeed with difficulty that he restrained himself from speaking of it in the presence of Leonore—who still remained in ignorance of it. By some kind instinct, as well as by their mistress's commands, the slaves were silent concerning Raymond in her presence, and she never mentioned him, hiding the memory of her love deep in her pure heart—where it was far from the gaze of others—while it held a strong sway over every emotion of her gentle nature—purifying all her thoughts, and etherealizing all her aspirations.

Mr. Pierce looked sadly upon the young mourner—and stricken father. But for her his heart sorrowed most deeply. He saw that her life was darkened, and feared that it would soon pass away. On her pale, serene face he saw shadowed forth the deep despair that shrouded her soul. In the weary movements of her body, were plainly visible the lassitude of the mind; and in the unchanging gloom of her deep-brown eyes was revealed the despondency and inaction of her spirit. She seemed indeed to await calmly and hopefully the approach of death, for she had already said to Aldeane “I shall soon die. The vital cord that holds my soul to this frail body was always slender. The shock of George’s death nearly severed it; disease will soon perform the rest. Consumption—the heir-loom of my race—long ago laid his hand upon me. I used to fear his coming, but now I can contemplate it without a pang or shudder.”

Aldeane felt that this was true. Yet she endeavored to arouse her from the apathy into which she had fallen. But that seemed a hopeless task. Mr. Pierce’s arrival did for a time bring back some slight animation to her being; for she felt that he had come for the body of her beloved, and that she could not let it be taken from the place where she hoped ere long also to repose. As she one day sat alone in the library thinking of this, she could but cry, “It shall not be; it shall not be!” without knowing how, in any way, she could prevent it.

Mr. Pierce entered the room in search of a paper; upon seeing her he turned to leave, but she asked him to remain; and drawing a chair near her, he awaited her pleasure.

For some moments she remained silent, while Mr. Pierce sorrowfully regarded her. At last she said tremulously:—

“Mr. Pierce, must you take him away?”

He was for a moment startled by this abrupt question,

but presently replied: "Such are my instructions, Miss Arendell."

"I won't let him go! Indeed, I can not!" she exclaimed quickly, twining her hands nervously together. "Am I not his wife? He shall stay with me!"

"Pray don't excite yourself," returned Mr. Pierce, soothingly. "You have indeed a just right to claim the body of our lamented friend. Still Mr. Edward Raymond desired that every honor should be paid him, and for that purpose wished him to be interred in Canada."

"Who is this Mr. Edward Raymond? I never heard of him before."

"He is a distant relative of the late Walter Raymond, quite an old man, and immensely rich. For some reason he has not been friendly with Mr. Raymond for years. But now he seems to have forgotten every cause for anger, if any ever existed, and to desire every attention to be paid to the remains of him who has for so long stood between him and a vast estate. I act altogether under his directions."

"Mr. Pierce," replied Leonore, "I know that you are kind. You would not voluntarily trample upon a heart, bruised and bleeding as mine is. You do not guess the extent of my sufferings, and I know that they will soon be past. All that I desire on earth, is the simple privilege of being allowed to rest by the side of Raymond, in the grave-yard at Loring. Can you deny me that little consolation?"

He looked at her with deep pity.

"You know that I am dying," she continued, wistfully.

He could not deny the assertion. He took her hand tenderly, and said huskily, "Give me your commands, and I will obey them spite of all previous orders."

"Ah! thank you! thank you!" murmured Leonore. "You will then allow George to remain here. Oh, it would be worse than death to see him taken away!

Death! death!" she repeated in a low voice. "It has no sting for me."

"Do not speak so, my dear Miss Arendell!" cried Mr. Pierce, greatly agitated. "All shall be as you wish. I am certain that Mr. Edward Raymond would not wish me to act contrary to your wishes. At any rate they are sacred to me; and I will not."

Leonore silently pressed his hand and, after a moment's silence, said: "I shall never forget your kindness; and I believe that you will never regret it."

They were silent for a few minutes, when rising to depart Mr. Pierce said in a low voice. "May God assuage your grief; may you live to comfort your father in his afflictions!"

"That can not be," she answered, in a trembling voice. "I have heard my summons. I shall soon go home." She sighed wearily, and added:—"I long to go and be at rest with him."

"'Tis sad, indeed," said Mr. Pierce in a voice of deep emotion, "to hear one so young and beautiful speak thus calmly of death. Can you not arouse yourself! Think of life. Look at it as a state of calm happiness. No storms would ever approach you to disturb your tranquillity. Your many friends would ward them off. In ministering to the wants of others you may yet be happy or at least contented."

"The storm that killed George swept from my view all joys and pleasures, and from my heart all its aspirations," she answered, simply. "The winds of cruel misfortune have borne from my soul all its beauty. Upon that arid desert the flowers of love and hope can never bloom again. Oh, I long to die and be with him. Earth has no home for me!" A few tears strayed over her pale cheeks, and fell upon the little white hands twining themselves so nervously together in her lap. "Do you think those thoughts so very wicked? Indeed, I can not ban-

ish them!" she said, hopelessly, glancing up with an expression touching from its childish pitifulness.

The strong man before her bent his head, and wept like a little child.

"I will go now," he presently said, very sorrowfully. "Miss Arendell, I will go forever; my presence, I am sure, must give additional gloom to your thoughts. I will only have a suitable tombstone erected, and then I will leave you alone to your sacred grief."

Leonore pressed his hand over her heart quickly, while a spasm of agony for a moment contracted her features. Mr. Pierce looked at her in alarm. "It is nothing," she replied, answering his look of inquiry. "Bear with me one moment longer."

He sat down beside her, and begged her to proceed.

"You know I often go to George's grave," she said, softly. "You know how sweet a place it is. I would not see it changed. Wait until another hillock rises beside his, then two marble slabs shall mark the place where we repose. Let not the sacred ground be touched till then. Choose for us both monuments, and let them be erected together."

Mr. Pierce looked at her in surprise.

"It will not be long!" she pleaded. "Oh! how could I bear to see his name there alone! and read each time I go there the record of that death that is written upon my heart in words of fire!"

"Poor child! poor child! sorrow has given you strange thoughts," said Mr. Pierce.

"Let him rest! let him rest!" she murmured, entreatingly. "It needs no marble slab to point out to me the spot where he lies. When I, too, am there 'twill be time enough for the record to be given to the world."

Bending forward, Mr. Pierce pressed his lips upon her pure uplifted brow, whispered, "All shall be as you wish," and hastily left the room.

Tears blinded his eyes, and he stumbled over Aldeane in the hall before he saw her.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Guthrie!" he said, in a trembling voice.

"It is granted, with pleasure," she replied, glancing at him closely. "You have just left Leonore, I suppose?" she added, perceiving his agitation.

"Yes," he answered, with a sigh. "God grant that I may never have another such interview with any one! Walk with me in the garden a few minutes, I beg. It has completely unmanned me."

Aldeane took his arm, and they turned into the walk leading to the great oak-tree. When they reached it, he sat down on the ornamental seat at its base, and said, excitedly:—

"She is dying, Miss Guthrie! dying, I say!"

"I fear so, indeed!" she returned, sadly.

"I know it," replied Mr. Pierce, emphatically. "I had hoped that her distress was but the natural grief that a tender young girl would feel at the death of her lover. But it is far more, far more! Raymond possessed not only her heart, but a strong influence over her very being. He had become her life, the support of her existence; when he died—morally speaking—she died also. Scarce a spark of life animates her feeble body, and her mind has lost all its strength. She can think of but one thing, and that, Death. Nothing seems to arouse her."

"And do you think that she will soon die?" asked Aldeane, weeping. "May she not linger even for years?"

"No! no!" he answered, sorrowfully. "If Raymond had lived, she might have been spared, for the excess of her love for him would have made her happy, and that foul specter Consumption might have sought her in vain. It is not that, even now, that is killing her."

"Not consumption?" ejaculated Aldeane.

"No," he answered, quietly. "She is dying of a

broken heart. You may all call it consumption, but I say that she would have lived free from it for years had not sorrow opened the way for its approach, and trampled upon her heart as its first resting-place."

"And do you think that she would have been happy if George Raymond had lived?"

"Yes. She would have trusted him so implicitly, that she would have seen all his better qualities only, and by her influence called them into action; his strange spirit would have been quelled by her gentleness, and his passions calmed by her love. He, perhaps, would never have been perfectly happy. His was too stormy a soul to know aught of so quiet a guest, but she would have rested as calmly and confidently upon his bosom as the moss on the foaming sea, knowing no danger and fearing none, and loving implicitly through life, would have fallen asleep, smiling, at its close."

Aldeane sighed deeply, then burst into a convulsive fit of weeping that agitated her fearfully. This was so unexpected that Mr. Pierce could but gaze upon her in grave surprise. Sobs shook her frame, and the few tears that strayed over her cheeks seemed wrung from her very heart. It was not often that Aldeane wept, but when she did it always appeared to relieve her feelings. Now it had a contrary effect. Her sobs nearly choked her, and her heart seemed bursting with wild pain.

"I can not understand this, Miss Guthrie," said Mr. Pierce at last, in a low voice. "This is so different from your usual manner. It is perfectly incomprehensible."

"Ah, if you knew all!" gasped Aldeane. "If you knew all, you would no longer wonder at me!"

"Tell me all," he said gently. Aldeane drew away the hand that he had grasped in his earnestness. "For your own sake," he added reproachfully. "Do I deserve this distrust? Can you not place confidence in me?"

"I have never tried you," she replied simply. "But indeed, Mr. Pierce, I have need of all your counsel and sympathy for the unhappy part I took in the unfortunate events that have lately transpired."

"Poor child," said Mr. Pierce, as another gush of wild sobbing racked her frame. "I pity you, indeed! I know that you have suffered, and do still. Tell me your griefs, my child. Perhaps I can soothe you a little."

When partly composed, Aldeane related the greater portion of the memorable conversation that she had held with George Raymond a few days before his death; ending with the bitter cry, "Oh, if I had but told Colonel Arendell all I suspected, his life and hers might have been saved!"

"Not so," said Mr. Pierce, after a few moments' thought, "not so. Raymond would have been perfectly furious, had his secret been betrayed. No one knows what rash deed he might have been led to commit. He might have killed Colonel Arendell, or himself, or even his bride elect; for you say yourself that his reason forsook him, at the mention of his wrongs, whether real or fancied. Think what a blow the knowledge of his birth would have been to Leonore. His death has shaken her reason, that revelation I believe would have dethroned it forever. Poor drooping lily, it will soon bloom in heaven! You need not weep over your reticence, Miss Aldeane, I have reason to believe that even worse calamities than have already befallen the family, were averted by it."

Aldeane was slightly comforted. "If *she* could be spared!" she murmured.

"The fairest flowers are those fragile ones that bloom and die in spring-time," said Mr. Pierce, musingly.

"Spring-time!" repeated Aldeane, shuddering. "Spring-time! Ah, how dreary a one this has been! What will the next bring forth?"

Mr. Pierce, responded in low tones:—

"Another little grave shall be,
Beneath the willow-tree,
The sun shall tinge it, with its gold,
And sweetest flowers shall there unfold."

He walked slowly away, while Aldeane remained to weep more calmly, and to watch with agonized solicitude a little white-robed figure that was sitting at one of the upper windows, looking drearily, and with an air of fixed melancholy, out upon the scene below. Her large brown eyes shone strangely out from the mass of wavy hair, hanging around her bloodless cheeks. An expression of deep pain rested on her lips, while one of calm resignation gave to the face an appearance of almost angelic sweetness. She seemed not to be thinking, but rather as if patiently waiting for some one to come—one, whose form she could never more hope to see; as if listening for a footstep that no more should greet her longing ear. She was twining her white hands together in a strange nervous manner she had lately assumed. Sitting there in the dying light of the day, Leonore Arendell seemed indeed but a wreck of her former self, and Aldeane once more wept passionately, crying bitterly, "Oh, if *she* could be spared! if she could be spared!" Looking up after such an outburst of grief, she perceived that daylight had faded, and a moonless night set in. Groping her way back to the house, she heard her name called in hurried tones. Mrs. Arendell met her in the hall, and the light she held in her hand revealed Aldeane, pale and confused.

"Ah, how you frightened me!" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell with a start. "Where have you been? We have been seeking you ever so long."

"I have been down by the great oak," she replied in a low voice.

"What! so near, and you have not heard us calling

you? There are a couple of letters for you, but come into tea first."

She hastily excused herself, and taking the light and letters, ascended to her room. Putting them down she sat for a long time lost in thought. At last raising her eyes, she saw the superscription of one of the letters. It was from Arthur, and with a sigh she broke the seal.

"Dearest Aldeane," it commenced. "From your letters I perceive that darkness is still brooding over Arendell House; and I fear is enshrouding you all too closely. I wish I could prevail upon you to come North; for I believe you can do no one any good, and yourself much harm, by remaining South. I know that your presence must be a great comfort to your afflicted friends, still that must be swallowed up in their sorrow at seeing you droop beneath their cares. And this from the tone of your letters I know, Aldeane, you are doing. I beg of you to come to us *now*, when the appointed time arrives I fear your health will have failed—for I know that those strange events that have lately taken place have made wide inroads upon your happiness, and I presume also your bodily welfare. Then come to us now. Belle mingles her entreaties with mine. We long to greet you. Do not disappoint us."

"You speak joyfully of my happiness. You know, while Belle is near me I can never know misery. Yet recently I have had many things to cause me anxiety. I do not speak of this to add to your care, my sister, but because I have always confided in you, and trusted to you for sympathy and counsel. But indeed I hope and believe that this matter is not of sufficient importance to cause either of us any anxiety."

"You are aware with what fair prospects Halcombe and I entered upon our career, and how much confidence our numerous friends and acquaintances reposed in us. In some way that confidence has been shaken. Although

I have not before mentioned it to you, I have observed it for some time past, but thought a mere fancy; but now I can not but feel that it is indeed reality. One of our most important clients, without giving any reason, and with scarcely an apology, has taken his business from our hands, and placed it in that of others. Another has signified his intention of doing so, while many seem cold in their greetings, and cast upon us suspicious glances. Slandrous reports, so vague as to be undeniable, are floating about the city; too unsubstantial to be contradicted, yet weighty enough to prejudice many against us. I can suspect but one reason for this. I refer it all to the implacable hatred of Jonas Nevins. I have written to you before of the figure that he makes in Boston now, since he has become a stock-broker. We were mistaken, Aldeane, when we supposed him to be a miserly, ignorant farmer. He is, in reality, well educated, and one of the most cunning and vile of men. He has been acting a false part for years, although he has never been able to conceal his baseness. He has appeared to us, to have no other ambition than the accumulation of money, for the mere pleasure of hoarding it. Now he seems to care for nothing but display. He boards at the most fashionable hotel in Boston, and is having the farm-house fitted up beautifully for the reception of his visitors during the summer. He is, indeed, a perfectly changed man. In the fashionably attired, polite Mr. Nevins of Boston, you would find it almost impossible to recognize the uncouth, surly Jonas Nevins of the mountain-farm.

"We have met in the streets a few times, and he has bowed to me, smiling maliciously, as if certain that he held me in his power. My passion is so great, at such times, that it is with difficulty I can restrain myself from striking him.

"Referring the difficulty to the same source as I do, Mr. Ashton affects to laugh at it, though I can readily per-

ceive that it troubles him. As for Chester Halcombe, he becomes sometimes almost discouraged, at others vastly indignant. He has not lost one particle of his faith in me, yet I know that he sometimes wishes that we had not entered into partnership, though he has not even insinuated such a thing to me.

"I was out to the cottage yesterday; Belle is as beautiful as ever, and appears to love me with the devotedness that I do her. She intrusted me with a variety of messages for you. It is by her advice that I have written to you of my little trouble; knowing how much you are burdened with the afflictions of those that are with you, she had not the heart to add even the weight of a feather to your load of cares. Yet she wished you to know of this, in order that you might be prepared for it, should any thing untoward result from it.

"The house on — Street is nearly completed; I pray that nothing may prevent us from taking up our abode in it at the appointed time. Belle says, trustingly, that nothing shall; but I am sometimes oppressed by doubts and fears, although I firmly believe that I can outlive those vague and baseless slanders, and I assure you nothing would give me more joy than to triumph over the diabolical hatred and persecutions of Jonas Nevins.

"Frederic Morgan and his wife are at home this summer. Her health is very delicate, and I fear that Fred's most tender solicitude will not stay the ravages of that fell disease which has long been preying upon her. Since his marriage, he has followed the practice of his profession assiduously, seeming never to tire, happy only when exerting his powers to the utmost. The poor bless him, and the rich will trust no other, for miles around. He has lost much of the gay elasticity of spirit that distinguished him in his bachelor days, and although apparently cheerful, a shadow hangs over his heart, seen only by his nearest friends, such as I have the honor to

be. Perhaps it is his wife's constant sickness that oppresses him; whatever is the cause, he is sadly changed.

"Allie, again I say come to us! Write immediately when I may meet you in New York. Come to your loving Belle, and your anxious and affectionate brother.

"ARTHUR GUTHRIE."

A new sorrow darted into Aldeane's heart, and rankled there as she read this epistle. It filled her with alarm. She doubted not but that Nevins was bent upon Arthur's destruction, and she feared much the result of his machinations; she longed to fly to him at once to shield him from his enemy, and she thought with wrathful impatience how little her efforts would avail. "Shall I go or not," was the perplexing question that haunted her. She heard a soft footfall on the stairs, and thought of Leonore. "Ah, I can not leave her!" she cried; "to her I can be some comfort, but to him I can do no good." And after an hour spent in tearful thought, she answered Arthur's letter, as she had one of Belle's before, saying, that though her inclinations bade her hasten to the North, her duty held her South, and there she would stay till Leonore rallied from her grief, or yielding to it, died. It was hard thus to write, and her resolution almost failed her, when she fancied she heard a slight noise in Leonore's room. Catching up the light, she hastily sped thither, and found every thing perfectly quiet. She had been unnecessarily alarmed, but she could not go without one look at the object of her solicitude. She lay upon the bed so coldly pale, that but for a slight quivering motion of the lips, as her breath parted them, her tranquil sleep might have been taken for death. A reflection, rather than stamp of pain seated upon her features, while a sigh gently parted her lips. Aldeane bent to press a kiss upon the waxen brow, and to smooth her dark hair back, when she heard the eagerly whispered word, "George! George!" as if

the soul of the young dreamer were in communion with that of her lover.

With a sigh, Aldeane returned to her chamber, and to the completion of her letter. Ere it was finished the clock struck twelve, and soon afterward she lay down to sleep restlessly till morning. At its approach she arose, and descended to the garden, to seek in the fresh air that repose of spirit which the night had failed to bring. Gradually it came, and her mind, losing much of the care that had lately weighed upon it, turned with delight to the beauty that lay bathed in dew, sparkling in the early sunbeams. Even before the tempest that had swept half its arbors and trellisses away, the garden had never looked more beautiful than now. Pursuing her favorite walk to the oak-tree, Aldeane looked with quiet pleasure around her. She thought of the first morning, and how much had since then transpired. Jessie, with a laughing "Good-morning, Miss Aldeane," ran by her to join the boys, whose merry voices were heard in the distance. Then all was silent, and Aldeane again relapsed into reverie. As she approached the oak, she was startled by a voice saying cheerily:—

"Ah, Miss Guthrie, you are an early riser like myself, I see; and as fond, too, of this shady path!"

Turning, she beheld Mr. Pierce advancing toward her. "How are you to-day?" he asked, clasping her hand, and and looking at her anxiously; "you have passed a sleepless night, I fear. Why will you worry so?"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Pierce, I have slept well," she answered with a faint smile.

"Perhaps so—for you," he answered. "But it is perfectly unnatural that one so young, should toss and dream all night, to wake at morning, only to brood over the sorrows of others throughout the day. A change would do you good, Miss Guthrie. I must take you away—North with me. Will you go?"

She shook her head sadly.

"Eh! Why not, now?" he persisted. "Are you not going a few months later, and for the sake of my escort, will you not hurry the time a little?"

"Say nothing about it. Indeed, I don't know that I shall go at all, Mr. Pierce."

"Not at all!" he repeated. "Nonsense, you shall go! You are getting as white and thin as Leonore! Do you want to die with her? You shall not at any rate, you must go North with me! There is Mrs. Arendell on the piazza now, I will speak to her about it this moment."

He started away; but Aldeane's hand, laid firmly, though gently upon his arm, detained him.

"Don't say any thing to her about it! Please don't!" she pleaded, "I can not go now, but I think I will in December; but I can not leave them all now, even Colonel Arendell would miss me sadly."

"He could not do without you!" exclaimed Mr. Pierce, looking at her admiringly. "He told me yesterday, that you and his good wife are his only comforters, and that if either were taken away, he should be entirely prostrated. But I forget! I am injuring my own cause."

"Not at all!" replied she, "I could never consent to leave them now."

"Promise me, that you will in December, Aldeane! It distresses me beyond measure, to see you so careworn and pale. Come, promise me!"

"I can not, indeed!" she answered. "You know that I will go to my brother's wedding if it is possible to do so; but not if Leonore needs my company as much as she does now."

"You are a noble girl," cried Mr. Pierce, earnestly. "Will you do one thing that I ask of you?"

"A dozen if compatible with my duty," she replied.

"Oh; this is nothing to interfere with it! Will you

write to me when I am gone to let me know the end of all this? You can not wonder that I am deeply interested."

"I will let you know all that transpires," she answered readily. "When do you expect to leave us?"

"Within two days. I have in fact nothing to stay for. I shall remain in New York a week or two, to have poor Raymond's monument, which I have already ordered, finished, and also, according to the wish of Leonore, I shall have it safely stored there, to remain until sent for. It almost kills me to think that that fair child must die."

The breakfast-bell was sounded, and turning, they went silently back to the house.

"Oh, mamma!" they heard Jessie exclaim, as they entered the dining-room. "Mr. Pierce is going away in a day or two I heard him tell Miss Aldeane so in the garden this morning."

"When, little eavesdropper?" asked Mrs. Arendell.

"Just a minute ago. I was going to speak to her, but she didn't notice me, and I heard them talking about sister Nora, and Mr. Raymond, and—"

"Jessie!" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell, while Leonore turned deadly pale. "Jessie!" and catching the frightened child in her arms, she carried her screaming from the room. Frank and Eddie looked on in surprise, and Colonel Arendell looked at them helplessly, trembling from head to foot, as since his illness he always did at the slightest excitement. Leonore clutched the tablecloth nervously with both hands, and presently asked faintly:—

"Are you, indeed, going so soon, Mr. Pierce?"

"I am, Miss Arendell," he replied.

"And—" she began, with a painfully anxious look.

"Do not distress yourself, Miss Arendell, your wishes shall be respected in all things."

A smile of thankfulness illumined her face for a moment, then left it as grave and pale as before.

Mrs. Arendell did not again appear, and a languid conversation was kept up between Mr. Pierce, Aldeane, and Frank, and when they arose from the table it was with a feeling of relief that each turned away to their wonted avocations.

The day following, Mr. Pierce took his departure. Aldeane watched him from her window, as far as the bend of the road, with a strange feeling of desolation and oppression, as if she had a difficult, and weary task to perform, and him on whom she most relied for assistance and support was taken from her. Unconsciously she had come to rely upon his judgment, and found comfort in his sympathy. But not long could she indulge such thought. Throwing her arms around her neck, and bursting into tears, Leonore exclaimed in an agonized voice:—

"He is gone! he is gone! Even *his* friends desert me!"

"No; not all!" replied Aldeane, soothingly. "You forget, Leonore, that I am still with you, and I was his friend."

"Oh, I wish I was with him! I wish I was with him!" with a fresh burst of sobs, was her only reply.

"Leonore! Leonore!" said Aldeane, in as stern a voice as she could use to her. "You are wicked—you forget that God will take you in his own good time. You ought rather to pray to live to be a blessing to those who love you so well."

"Ah, it will be better for all when I am gone!" she answered, mournfully. "Do not wish me to live, Allie. You do not know what it is to have your brimming cup of love dashed from your lips, and one filled with the very dregs of bitterness and woe to quaff instead."

"Alas! I know too well," thought Aldeane, but she

only said, "Will nothing comfort or arouse you? Come; let us walk in the garden, some of the paths are beautiful and shady to-day."

She arose and went, just as she did every thing, uncomplainingly, unenjoyingly. A sort of stupor seemed to have seized upon her faculties. She was alive to nothing but her sorrows, and they seemed to have almost crazed her mind. A wreck of what she once had been, she seemed patiently to await her final dissolution. She remained constantly with Aldeane, shunning almost all other company. She would sit for hours, smoothing the folds of her black dress with her thin white hands, or twining them restlessly together in her lap. Her brown eyes gazing wistfully around, and her lips half parted as if to speak. Paler and more unearthly she became day by day, until, at the end of the summer, she appeared like a being from the skies, so fair and fragile had she become.

With the cool winds of autumn she seemed to revive, and all began feebly to hope that she might regain her health and partial happiness. Mrs. Arendell urged the colonel to take her to Cuba, but Leonore seemed unwilling to take the journey, so it was deferred. She said to Aldeane:—

"I am afraid to go; I want to die at home!"

Nothing could banish the thought of death from her mind, it was fixed there, to the expulsion of all ideas of life and joy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALDEANE RETURNS TO THE NORTH.

As the time appointed for her journey North approached, Aldeane became restless and uneasy. Arthur and Belle became still more urgent for her return, but much as she desired to go to them, she could not endure the thought of leaving the Arendells even for a short time; so much did they seem to depend upon her. Yet her brother required her personal counsel and sympathy also, for his practice was much reduced by the secret assaults of his old enemy, and Mr. Halcombe had already mentioned the desirableness of a disruption of partnership.

Arthur had proposed to Mr. Ashton, that his marriage with Belle should at least be deferred, but Mr. Ashton, whose confidence in the young lawyer was nothing shaken by his misfortunes, would not listen to it, and it was to take place at the appointed time. He thought that this public act of confidence in Arthur, would restore that of others, and that he would soon regain his popularity.

A wet, dreary day in December found the inmates of Arendell House gathered in the sitting-room, around a glowing wood fire. Colonel Arendell was writing, Leonore looking idly out of the window, and Aldeane busily engaged in instructing Eddie and Jessie. Frank had been sent to school early in the fall, and she now had but two pupils, thus leaving her much time to be with Leonore, who had arisen, and was looking with an air of some interest down the road.

"Pa, there is a horse and buggy crossing the bridge," she said. "What can bring any one here such a wet day?"

"Probably it is Dr. Grey, coming to see you, my dear. You know he doesn't mind a little rain. Has he stopped here?"

"Yes, papa. But it is not Dr. Grey, but a young gentleman."

She started as a young man leapt from the vehicle. The tall, commanding figure, and dark complexion, reminded her painfully of Raymond, and seemed strangely familiar.

Colonel Arendell walked to the window. "Come here, Miss Allie," he said, "and tell me whether you know who this is hurrying up the walk. I am sure I have seen him before!"

She went to his side, and in a joyous voice exclaimed: "Arthur! dear Arthur!" and rushed to meet him.

"So it is!" cried Leonore. "How strange that we did not recognize him, but his hat is slouched over his face so! Ah, how delighted Aldeane is!" she continued, as she heard a faint scream of delight, and beheld her clasped in Arthur's warm embrace.

In another moment he was in the house, where he was received warmly, and with many exclamations of surprise at his unexpected appearance. After the first joyful moment of meeting was passed, Aldeane's heart sank within her, and with trembling lips, she asked:—

"Why *have* you come, Arthur? Has any thing more occurred?"

"Nothing more," he replied. "I came simply to conduct you home."

Leonore looked at him sorrowfully for a moment, and then as if with an effort said, "You are right, Mr. Guthrie," and hurried from the room.

"We shall miss Aldeane very much," said the colonel, "but I believe a trip North will do her good."

"And this is the very time for her to take it, as you are about to take Miss Leonore to Cuba. Dr. Morgan commissioned me to say, when I told him I was coming here to take Aldeane home, that he could join you there with his wife, as she is so very delicate."

Aldeane averted her face quickly.

"We have given up the trip to Cuba," said Mrs. Arendell, "Leonore seems to be so very unwilling to leave home. But how is Annie? Do you think that her life is in danger?"

"I do, indeed, madam," replied Arthur. "She seems to be gradually sinking, in spite of Morgan's care. I fear she will soon pass from earth."

"I fear that our tears will scarcely be dried for one, ere they will flow for another!" sighed the colonel, as Leonore glided by the window.

"Aldeane!" exclaimed Mrs. Arendell, quickly, wishing to change the subject: "Your brother must be weary. Show him to a room, will you? And order a servant to attend him."

Aldeane led the way to the apartment that had been occupied by George Raymond. Arthur caught her in his arms when they were alone, and looking sorrowfully upon her careworn face, exclaimed:—

"Oh, Aldeane! Aldeane! you are sacrificing yourself for others! It is wrong! indeed it is. Thanks be, I have arrived in time to save you two months' care at least!"

"But really, Arthur—!"

"But really, Aldeane—! but we will not discuss the point now. You have not asked me about any of your Boston friends yet!"

"Your arrival has so distracted me that I have been unable to collect my senses sufficiently to ask any thing. I suppose they are all well."

"Yes; and very anxious to see you."

"Well, I am glad I am so kindly remembered. I will

leave you now to make yourself a little presentable. Belle would scarcely smile to see you at present. You will find us in the parlor."

She left him, thinking sadly how changed he was. He appeared haggard and careworn, when a few years before he had been so careless and buoyant. He had altered nearly as much as she had, during the years they had been separated. His broad, thoughtful brow, was already slightly furrowed by anxiety; his nervous temperament was plainly discernible in his quick flashing eyes. He evidently suffered much from the secret assaults of Nevins, although he often feigned indifference to them. It was not until the evening of the next day that Arthur and Aldeane found an opportunity for private conversation. They were in the library, sitting before a glowing fire, which the coldness of the day rendered necessary to comfort. They had been talking of Belle, and other friends, but Arthur at last became silent, at last exclaiming:—

"If my business was only prosperous I should be perfectly happy!"

"Do you think," asked Aldeane in a hesitating manner, for she feared to give to her voice a cadence of doubt as to his integrity or ability, "do you really think that Mr. Nevins is the sole cause of your failure?"

"Certainly he is!" replied Arthur, vehemently. "He hates me with the strongest, and most enduring animosity with which it is possible for one man to hate another. Not content with robbing me of my sole inheritance he seeks to disgrace me in the eyes of the world, and to render me forever a debtor to the best friend I have on earth."

"Can not you arrest this persecution in some way?" asked Aldeane anxiously. "Every thing is to be feared if it continues much longer."

"No, not every thing; for I firmly believe Mr. Ashton

will never lose his confidence in me; it would kill me if he should—and Belle will always love me—that feeling appears to be an attribute of her nature—thank God—and can not be changed. Only one way can I see to baffle Nevins, and save myself. Aldeane, if I could recover that lost document that mother obtained from him, we should be able to ruin him!”

“Ah!” said Aldeane, with an incredulous smile, “you still believe, then, that that document once existed?”

“I am sure of it! Positive! I have lately been to every lawyer in the neighborhood, thinking that perhaps to baffle Nevins mother placed it in strange hands, but I have not been able to discover that she ever called upon either of them. Mr. Evans you know was particular about every thing. There is an entry made in a record-book, the January before we went to school—I have forgotten the exact date. ‘Mrs. Nevins called to-day on private and important business’—and again, but a few months before her death, ‘Mrs. Nevins intrusted to my care to-day several important papers, to be kept carefully until after her decease, then to be delivered to her son Arthur.’ Charley happened to come across those passages one day while looking over his father’s books. He wrote to me to come and pay him a visit. I did so; and while there, ransacked drawers, safes, and trunks, full of documents, without finding the ones I sought, although I am positive they were given into the lawyer’s hands—are probably now in existence.”

“Mr. Charles Evans seems to take a great interest in the case,” said Aldeane, after a pause.

“He does, indeed,” answered Arthur. “You know we were boys together, and inseparable when at home. It is not often that the friendships of youth endure as ours has. Since I commenced practicing, I have been indebted to him for a number of clients in Boston; but,” he added gloomily, “they are falling off now, one by one.”

"And Mr. Halcombe feels it as much as you, of course?"

"Yes, that is true! The poor fellow is undecided what to do; his father and brother urge him to leave the firm, while his love and confidence in me incline him to cling till the last. I have spoken to him plainly on the matter, and we have at length come to the conclusion, that if our prospects do not improve, we will part in the spring. Mr. Ashton has strong hopes that my marriage with his daughter will restore public confidence: for people will say, 'If Ashton can trust him so far as to give him his only daughter, we surely can trust our business affairs in his hands.' I can only hope that it will be so, without feeling any assurance of it."

"But, Arthur, what is it that Mr. Nevins has said about you?" asked Aldeane. "You have never told me that yet."

"I do not know myself," replied Arthur. "All is so vague and uncertain, and Nevins has conducted himself with so much caution, that I have never been able to prove that he has said any thing against me, or found any thing to deny. In my own mind, not by any outward evidence of it, I am sure that he is working my ruin. Certain it is, that the very first of my clients that deserted me, was a gentleman with whom he had become very intimate, and since then others have followed in his train, until nearly all the business has fallen away. I have not been able to demand reasons for this, but I have heard repeatedly that some of those gentlemen said that 'a man's future may be judged from his past life.' 'Tis as well to put one's affairs in the hands of those one knows to be reliable, as to trust it with young lawyers of doubtful integrity."

"And again, that if Mr. Halcombe was alone, they should not think of taking their patronage from him, but now, that they consider it best to do so. All of which

contains strong insinuations against me. All this, I perceive, has taken effect upon Chester; he often eyes me askance, and seems to have no hope that we shall ever rise together. He is, in fact, anxious for a separation, though he does not wish to wound my feelings by frankly telling me so. I am a most unfortunate fellow, indeed," and Arthur sighed deeply.

"Oh, no, you are not," cried Aldeane. "Think how many true friends you have; think how Belle loves and trusts you! and how happy you will be in the possession of that love—to be yours—yours alone forever! Oh, how blest!"

Arthur took her hands within his own, pressing them gently, and looking into her eyes—"Yes, I shall indeed be blest! But you, Allie, how is it with you? Your hopes, I fear, have been cruelly blighted."

"Oh, Arthur!" She fell upon his bosom with a low scream of real anguish. She had not known before how slight a word would rend her heart. She had sealed the fountain of her tears, and shunned thought. She had fancied she had almost forgotten; but these few words of sympathy, spoken in loving tones, had aroused again all her love and despair.

For a moment Arthur held her in his arms, in astonishment; then lifting up her pale face, asked sternly: "Have you been trifled with, and then your pure loving heart thrown aside?"

"You know it was not so!" she cried, passionately. "He loved me; he does still!" She breathed out the words as if she found a fierce pleasure in them. "His puny wife is nothing more than a petted child to him, and yet she took precedence of me!"

"You love Frederic Morgan! Oh, Aldeane! Aldeane!" cried Arthur, alarmed more by her manner than her words; for she had risen and stood before him, her hand upraised and her eyes dilated. "You forget your-

self. He is the husband of another! Compose yourself, and forget the past again!"

"It was cruel of you to revive it," she exclaimed, sinking upon a sofa, and bursting into tears. She wept unrestrainedly, and soon became calm.

"You must and shall go North with me!" said Arthur, stopping before her in his rapid walk up and down the room; "your health is not good, and your nerves are shattered. You must go."

"But Leonore, poor little Leonore!" she sighed, her love for her drooping friend overcoming her own earnest wishes.

"That is all settled. Colonel Arendell and she are going to join—are going to Cuba next week."

"Ah! if that is the case——"

"You will go?"

"Joyfully! willingly! When shall we start?"

"We shall leave as soon as you can pack up. When will you be ready?"

"To-morrow; any time you please. Oh, dear old Boston, and Belle, and the cottage, how delighted I shall be to see them again!"

Arthur was much pleased to see her interest in home scenes so strongly awakened, and wisely resolved to leave the locality of anxiety and sorrow as quickly as possible.

"We will go the day after to-morrow," he said. "Meanwhile, don't cry yourself sick over parting with Leonore, or allow the children to suffocate you with their caresses, or deafen you with their cries, for I have promised to let you come back, if your health is sufficiently restored, in two months; Leonore is unwilling to stay longer in Cuba, and she could not exist here without you."

"Don't detain me any longer, nor talk to me about her, or I may change my mind. I must away and put my house in order, that I may find it so on my return."

He parted with her at the door, kissing her fondly, and said, "Go; but change your mind on your peril. I promised my Belle to bring you back with me, and I will not disappoint her, lest she should me also. The day after to-morrow! Remember!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A TREASURE FOUND.

THREE weeks later much had occurred. Arthur had triumphantly conducted his sister northward, where, after a painful parting with Leonore in New York, where with feelings indescribable she had caught a momentary glimpse of Frederic Morgan and his fashionable but delicate bride, she had had a most joyful meeting with Belle Ashton at Rose Cottage, and had beheld with joy the union of her dearly loved brother to his first love, her own faithful friend.

It had been what people usually call a "stylish wedding," the bride had been most exquisitely dressed, the bridesmaids in appearance owned just the requisite degree of inferiority to the central figure upon which all eyes were turned—the bridegroom was more universally admired than is usual with what is considered the secondary figure upon such an occasion—the guests had been of the *haut ton*, and the nuptial arrangements had been all that the most fastidious could desire, while the presents were the wonder and envy of all Boston for a month afterward.

But there had been one gift prized by Arthur above all others, though doubtless had Belle seen it she would have considered it a poor affair. But for some time she remained as ignorant of it as the gay company from which Charles Evans had drawn the groom aside, when he delivered to him a small packet and whispered in

triumphant tones, that it was the document for which they had searched so long.

"And actually, my father," said Evans, gleefully—"the queerest old soul he was, you know—had stowed it away in an old boot in the garret, and so our search, after all, was no bootless one." And Evans laughed at his own poor pun, and was heartily joined by Arthur, who declared it the best he had ever heard in his life, while with a violent effort he pocketed the paper, refraining from casting his eyes over it until a more fitting opportunity should present itself.

And when he had made himself master of its contents he revealed them to Mr. Ashton alone, and blessed "his lucky stars," that he had said nothing of it to Aldeane. And so she remained in his house three months totally unconscious of the new light that had beamed upon the young lawyer's eyes, and at times rendered him careless of the perplexities of his business, and more than once he said to Mr. Ashton, that he should be saved if a certain letter reached its destination in safety.

But the way perhaps was long, for ere the three months were quite over, Arthur's despondency returned, and one evening he returned from his office most seriously disturbed. Even his wife's gay raillery could not recall his usual cheerfulness. She anxiously inquired if he was ill. He replied in the negative, and endeavored to appear animated in her presence, but when she left the room, he threw himself on a sofa in such evident despondency that Aldeane seated herself beside him and said affectionately:—

"Tell me, Arthur, what has happened. Something has gone wrong at the office. These persecutions have been redoubled."

"They have, indeed, Allie!" he replied, bitterly. "Not one moment's happiness will the fiend give me. While he lives I can not hope to prosper; to hear of his death

would be the most joyful news any one could bring me!"

"Dear Arthur; pray don't speak so!" exclaimed Aldeane, almost terrified by the fierceness of his manner. "Don't pour out invectives against the cause of your anxiety, but tell me what it is."

"Nothing that should vex me so much, Allie, but that I fear it is the forerunner of many more serious disasters. You have heard me speak of Arnold More whose case we conducted so successfully last fall?"

Aldeane nodded.

"Well, there was a suit of his entered at court to-day by Leigh and Bronson! Now what does that mean but that the tide is again turning toward us. Halcombe was so surprised and angry, that he asked Mr. More the reason of the change. He replied, that he had made it by the advice of many friends, who had assured him that Leigh and Bronson were men of unusual talent and integrity. Halcombe was about to speak again, when Mr. More bowed coldly and left him. What gives greater significance to this event is, that Leigh and Bronson are Nevins's attorneys and confidants. Through them many of his poisoned darts have reached me. This shows that his brain is still plotting, and his hand raised against me."

"Poor brother; how much I pity you!" returned Aldeane, tears of tender sensibility glittering in her gentle eyes, "but I can not console you like that one to whom you should unburden all your cares."

"Ah! you mean my wife!" he replied, with a sigh. "No, Aldeane, I can not fill her loving heart with anxiety; I can not grieve my bride so quickly."

"It is better that she should suffer a little now," she said, persuasively, "than that the shock should come suddenly."

"Then you really believe, Aldeane, that I shall be vanquished at last; that I shall fall before this merciless foe."

"Every thing is to be feared," answered Aldeane. "If you love your wife, keep nothing a secret from her; let her know your cares and share them; it will be kindness in the end."

"I believe you," he replied, after a moment's reflection. "I believe you; and now shall begin our true wedded life. She shall be made partaker of my sorrows as well as of my joys."

On the following morning Aldeane readily perceived that Belle had indeed been made a confidant of by her husband. Though as cheerful, she was more thoughtful than usual, and after Arthur had left for the office Aldeane was not surprised to see her home and seat herself on the floor at her feet, in her old manner, and, as of yore, pour out her heart and ask for advice.

"You know, love," she concluded, "I must bear up, no difference what comes, for Arthur needs all my strength; he thinks so much of my welfare, that I must let him see that I am willing to bear as much for his sake as he can for mine, else his faithful heart will find me a burden instead of a solace."

"He would scarcely do that, Belle!" replied Aldeane. "You know that I love my brother as well as it is possible for me to do; though impulsive and passionate, he is the soul of integrity, and, I truly believe, has never been led beyond the confines of temperance and virtue. He loves you ardently, and I believe, above all others, you are best fitted to control his wayward nature. For years you have been the load-star of his existence; no other love has ever animated him. I entreat you, dearest, to beware of weakening this attachment. Remember that the highest duty of woman is to 'suffer and be strong.' Strong in her love, in her sympathy, and in resignation to whatever the Lord may deem good to afflict her with. In all the perplexities and sorrows that it may be your lot to share, console and advise, but never

upbraid him; his anger would burn more fiercely than his love. But I forget what I am saying; you know all this already. For the sake of the happiness of all, I pray you never to forget it."

Belle smiled confidently. "You warned me so often before my marriage, Allie, and besides, I have known Arthur so long, that I can not fail to remember it. But indeed, dearest, it seems as if we shall never be happy!" and she sighed deeply.

"That can scarcely be expected!" replied Aldeane, passing her hands lightly and caressingly over the bright curls of the young wife. "Perfect felicity can never be obtained in this world; we must look for it to a higher and holier source."

The bell rang loudly through the house, startling them both from the sober train of thought into which they had fallen.

"It is papa!" exclaimed Belle, springing up. "I know his ring; and there is his carriage at the door!"

In a few moments he entered the room. Immediately after the usual salutations were exchanged, Belle informed him of the fresh annoyance that had occurred to the young lawyers.

Mr. Ashton listened gravely to the recital. "I was in hope that this persecution had ceased," he at last remarked. "I saw that modern Judas Iscariot—Nevins—this morning in company with several of the best men of Boston, many of whom, I doubt not, were Arthur's clients, whom he was slyly but surely prejudicing against him. I must see to this matter; it must be stopped if possible."

He evidently felt more anxiety about the affair than he was willing to reveal to Belle and Aldeane. After a few moments' conversation upon the subject, he turned to Aldeane, with the inquiry when she proposed returning South.

"In a week at the farthest," she replied. "I am already prepared to go at an hour's warning."

"You wish to go by way of New York?"

"Of course!"

"Well, then," he continued, "if you will accept me for an escort, and be ready by Tuesday, I will accompany you as far as that city."

"Only four days!" exclaimed Belle. "Indeed, papa, she shall not go; 'tis bad enough that she will go at all, but I am sure it must not be so soon!"

"I will certainly be ready to accompany you, Mr. Ashton," said Aldeane, quietly.

Belle looked at her with a comical affectation of surprise. "That has been the way ever since the first day I met you!" she said, laughing. "You have always set aside all my arrangements as if they were not of the slightest consequence. If it was any one else but you, I would quarrel with them all day before I would allow it."

"But you find it best not to handle thistles!" laughed Aldeane.

"Well, if I am afraid to handle them myself, I will find some one that is not. I will call in Arthur to exert his authority, and detain you with us; I declare I will!"

"I care about as much for his authority now, as I did in my school days!" replied Aldeane, gayly. "Don't you remember, how we used to laugh at it together, and which has the most of it now? The one that laughed the most, I think."

Belle looked a little confused.

"Fairly caught!" cried Mr. Ashton. "Well, Allie, I understand that you are to go with me. Remember that I am on your side, and you shall do just as you please. Here is a budget of letters, that I got for you at the post-office, as I came along. One is from Havana,

I see. I shall be back with Arthur to dinner; you must let me know the news then. Adieu!"

The perusal of a long letter from Leonore occupied Aldeane's thoughts for some time after his departure. She spoke eloquently of Cuba; describing with enthusiasm its many beauties, and enlarging upon the pleasant life they led, sometimes in the city, then in country, tasting each luxury that the island afforded in their search for health.

Of Mrs. Morgan she spoke despondently. The spicy breezes seemed powerless to bring aught save the hectic flush of death to her cheek; the balmy air could plant no hue of health there, nor raise her spirits again to cheerfulness. It was plain that she was dying, and their return home would be hastened on her account. Aldeane feared that what Leonore had written of Annie, she might with equal truth have said of herself. Through all the forced gayety of the letter stole a dim shadow of sadness. She spoke lovingly of home, as one who pines for its shelter. Aldeane had always feared that travel would do little to keep her from the early tomb that seemed opening to receive her, and this letter only served to strengthen her fears. They were indeed confirmed by a short note from Colonel Arendell. He spoke despairingly of the invalids, saying that Leonore appeared no better, and that Annie's death was daily expected. Dr. Morgan, he said, with the most unceasing tenderness watched over his wife, and soothed her fleeting hours, and as Frederic's mother was also with them, no care and attention that either could bestow was for a moment neglected. He named an early day for their departure, unless Annie should become so much worse as to render it impossible, and concluded by begging Aldeane to be at home to meet them, much for his own sake, but more for Leonore's, to whom the disappointment would be very great if she were not there to meet her.

Aldeane shed many tears over those two letters. Tenderly she thought of Leonore and of the dying wife of him whom she still loved as deeply as ever. Sincere grief for her untimely fate filled her heart. She sorrowed deeply for her, without one selfish thought, and felt, that even were it in her power, she would not take from her one hour of happiness that she had enjoyed in her married life. Her heart leapt wildly as she thought of Frederic Morgan, and with an effort she banished the subject from her mind, for to think of him, she knew was dangerous to her peace.

The receipt of those letters determined her still more, in spite of Arthur and Belle's entreaties, to return South immediately. She reflected, that if Annie's strength had permitted they were already on their journey, and might reach home nearly as soon as she could. She could not endure the thought that Leonore should return to Arendell House, and find it so dull and gloomy, as it would certainly appear without her presence.

The last evening spent in Boston was quiet, and almost sad. Mr. Halcombe and Mr. Evans, with a few friends, came in to bid Aldeane farewell. Mr. Evans spoke of a weightier matter. His admiration had deepened into love, and although he had but little hope that she reciprocated the feeling, he offered her his heart and hand, assured that with her as his wife he should be one of the happiest of men, while a refusal would sadden without making him utterly miserable. Aldeane heard him respectfully, then in a delicate manner, most flattering and soothing to his feelings, declined his offer, and he left her, thinking more deeply on the matter than he had ever conceived his philosophical nature would permit him to upon any subject.

At early morning the last farewells were spoken, and Aldeane left her brother's house, leaving, with numberless prayers for their welfare, the young couple to bear to-

gether the cares and joys of life. Perhaps as she caught the last glimpse of them standing together, so loving, so strong in purpose and pure in heart, she thought with a pang of what might have been, and for a little time there came upon her such utter desolation, as the woman who had selfishly wrecked her happiness, could never, never have realized; and yet, which was at that moment the happier—the lonely governess, or Frederic Morgan's fair young bride?

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE GOVERNESS RESUMES HER DUTIES.

WAS ever such welcome given governess before, as that which met Aldeane Guthrie upon her return to Arendell House. The children met her at Loring, and half suffocated her with caresses, and deafened her with noisy demonstrations of delight, and Mrs. Arendell received her at the garden gate, and drew her to her bosom with a silent gush of tears, which were far more eloquent than any words. Aldeane returned the greeting as warmly, and almost hysterically, though such weaknesses were not at all usual to her.

The negroes, with countenances expressive of pleasure; gathered around her, and grasping her dress, Aunt Roxy, exclaimed:—

“Lor’, missie, I hope you’s brought back some ob de sunshine! It’s el’ar gone with you an’ Miss Nora. Bless you’ dear faces. I’s glad to see you back ag’in an’ dat she’s comin’, an’ I hope she’ll look as hearty as you do! You’ve done picked up mighty, Miss Aldeane.”

With a few kind words, Aldeane left the noisy group, and entered once more the well-remembered sitting-room. Jessie and Eddie, half wild with delight, danced around her, asking a dozen questions in one breath, and almost deafening her with their joyful exclamations. Mrs. Arendell soon turned them quietly from the room, and seating herself beside Aldeane, clasped her hands, and, while a few tears strayed over her face, murmured:—

"Oh! Aldeane, I am so glad you have again returned to us, I have missed you so very much! I was almost afraid that you would not come to us again, our house is so sad and lonely."

"Did you think that I could leave you in the midst of sorrow?" asked Aldeane, gently and reproachfully.

"Dear Aldeane, nothing can ever repay you for your kindness to us. Promise me, darling, that you will not leave us again while Leonore lives. 'There is no hope for her,' say all the physicians that the colonel has consulted. I expect them home daily; my only fear was that they would arrive before you. Leonore so longs to see you, that the disappointment would have been dreadful to her."

Aldeane endeavored to cheer the affectionate step-mother, whose nervous state she noticed with extreme sorrow, fearing to agitate her by the emotion which she could not repress, she retired to her own chamber, to rest and recover from the fatigue of her journey.

A few days after her return, as she was passing through the hall, Mrs. Arendell opened the door of her chamber, and asked her in a subdued voice to enter. She had been weeping violently, and an open letter edged with black was in her hand.

"Mrs. Arendell!" exclaimed Aldeane in terror, "tell me what has happened."

"Poor Annie is dead!" she sobbed.

Aldeane sank upon a chair, repeating the words in a bewildered manner, her heart beating with emotion, she could not herself define.

"Ah! I knew you would sympathize with us!" said Mrs. Arendell, as Aldeane covered her face with her hands, striving to collect her thoughts, and master the dizziness that blurred her sight. Strange feelings agitated her soul; pity for the young and beautiful departed certainly predominated, but thoughts that made her heart

throb wildly would come. It was some minutes before she could command her voice sufficiently to ask:—

“When did she die?”

“On the twenty-first day of February. They were making preparations for their return home, when she failed so perceptibly that the project had to be abandoned. For some days she lay as weak as an infant upon her bed, perfectly resigned to death. Frederic never for a moment left her, and she breathed her last in his arms, as peacefully as if she had fallen asleep.”

“And in such a becoming wrapper, just as she had hoped she would,” Leonore says. “You know Annie was so particular,” she added, turning to her without the slightest perception that there was something almost laughable in what she had said.

But there was no one there who felt the slightest inclination to laugh, even when she further said, that Annie had caused her hair to be put in papers the night before her death, that in case such an event should take place, she might appear to the best advantage in her coffin, and even Aldeane thrust from her mind these trivialities which, to many, would have rendered a rival contemptible, and thanked God, that she had died happily, that the sunshine of life had continued to her, even to the mysterious and awful entrance to Eternity.

“When, now, do you expect Colonel Arendell and Leonore?” she asked, anxious to divert her mind from the thoughts that thronged and confused it.

“The first of next week,” was the reply. “After Monday, I shall send the carriage to Loring every day, in anticipation of their arrival. I shall send for Frank, to-morrow; he is so anxious to see you, that I know he is impatient at my long delay, besides I want him here to meet Leonore, that all the family may be present, and make it as cheerful and pleasant as possible for her.”

Jessie and Eddie entered the room hastily. “Oh, mam-

ma!" they exclaimed, "Aunt Roxy says, Aunt Annie is dead! Is it so?"

They saw the answer in the tear-stained faces and sorrow-stricken appearance of the two ladies. Their noisy exclamations were hushed, and when Mrs. Arendell gently told them that it was true, they regarded each other with wondering looks, a feeling of awe stealing over them, as they heard that she was indeed numbered with the dead.

"Is Uncle Fred coming home with papa? Will he come here?" inquired Eddie.

A crimson flush, which she bent low to conceal, mounted to Aldeane's face, and her heart beat wildly as she awaited the answer.

"No, dear," said Mrs. Arendell. "Your uncle will go immediately to Boston; he will bring your aunt from Cuba to be buried in the family ground."

"Ah! indeed! I might have remembered that," thought Aldeane, with a feeling of relief. Then taking Eddie and Jessie, she left the room, to allow Mrs. Arendell the charm of solitude, in which to recover from the effects occasioned by the death of her young relative.

The remainder of the week was spent in preparation for the return of the travelers. Aunt Roxy was in her full glory, superintending the host of young darkies that were engaged in cleaning the house, and beautifying and clearing the grounds. A state of almost hopeless confusion prevailed, in the midst of which Frank came home. He had grown much during the few months that Aldeane had been separated from him, and she looked with increased love and pride upon her former pupil; now a handsome lad of fourteen, the favorite of the school, and the pride of the class of which he was a member. Still as much as ever he delighted in boyish sports and adventures, and the next day after his return

home, with a fishing-rod on one shoulder, and a gun over the other, he set off, followed by his favorite Jule, and returned at night, flushed with exercise, carrying a brace of rabbits, while his attendant bore in triumph a string of fish, which he declared, with admiration, "Young Mass'r done cotechd all by hisself!"

"Frank," said Aldeane, laughing, "how do you exist at school, where you can not hunt?"

"Well, it is hard work sure enough!" he replied, "but I'll make up for it now that I am at home, besides Chauncey Gardner and I have pledged each other for a fine ten days' hunt next vacation. I wish he was here now, he is a splendid fellow. Now there's Ed, fit for nothing but to follow mamma or you all over the house; pshaw!"

"You are altogether mistaken, Frank, Edward will be the wonder of the family yet, he has taken to studying so of late, that I really believe he is as far advanced in many studies as you are. Be careful, sir, or you will find your laurels gone, and crowning Edward's brow!"

Frank, laughing heartily, turned and glanced at his brother. "What profession shall you choose?" he asked merrily.

"I am going to study medicine with Uncle Fred," he returned quietly, then turned away annoyed and ashamed by the burst of laughter with which Frank greeted this announcement.

Frank was at his side in a moment. "I hope you will be successful," he said. "I shall always be a lazy fellow. You must redeem the name of the family from oblivion by your good works. I will stay at home and take care of the negroes and plantation, while you ride about dispensing bitter pills and draughts, to your heart's content, and the discontent and benefit of every one else."

Aldeane left the boys in earnest debate, and went to remind Mrs. Arendell that it was time to send the carriage

to Loring. It was already gone, but returned without the travelers.

The next day, however, they arrived. Leonore far more fragile than when she left, was also more beautiful. A faint glow produced by excitement tinged her cheek, giving a bright luster to her large eyes, which shone fitfully and wildly from out her thin face. She wept tears of joy upon her mother's bosom, and could but faintly speak to Aldeane, to express her joy at seeing her there.

After the noisy greetings from the servants and children were over, a feeling of intense fatigue overwhelmed her. Aldeane noticed the gradual paling of cheek and lips, and the weariness that lay in her eyes. She pressed her to drink a glass of wine, and then ascended with her to her own room. She seemed much affected to find herself once more within its loved and peaceful shelter. Unresistingly she suffered Aldeane to undress her; she asked but few questions, and said nothing of what had transpired during her absence. The bed upon which she had slept from childhood, seemed to invite her once more to repose; exhausted both in body and mind, she soon sank into a deep sleep. Aldeane bent over the dying beauty, and sorrowing saw how plainly her doom was stamped upon her brow. She lifted the white hand that lay upon her bosom, and saw George Raymond's likeness tightly clasped within it. She dropped a kiss upon the slightly parted lips, and left her to her calm repose.

On descending to the sitting-room, she saw with joy that the trip had benefited at least one of the party. Colonel Arendell seemed to have recovered the good health which he had enjoyed in former years; his spirits, saddened by the evident dissolution of his favorite child, on other subjects were hopeful and buoyant. He was rejoiced once more to be in the bosom of his family, and listened attentively to the tales the children related of

their progress during his absence, and in return related some of his own adventures.

After an early tea the children were dismissed, and Colonel and Mrs. Arendell with Aldeane gathered around the fire, to hear of those more solemn events that had recently transpired.

Colonel Arendell spoke of Mrs. Morgan's death in tones of quiet sorrow. "Though gentle and beautiful," he remarked, "she was totally unfit to be Frederic's wife. Cold and impassionless herself, she could never comprehend or assimilate with his ardent, impulsive nature. She seemed to esteem and respect him, but never to give him that true, deep love, which he craved. In return, Fred, I am sure, regarded her with that affection which we bestow upon a lovely child. Though perfectly devoted to her in her sickness, he mourned not her death as the direful loss of a loving wife—but rather as that of a petted child, whose prattle he would miss, and whose beauty he could no more hope to behold."

Aldeane found a few tears trickling through her fingers, as she bent her head upon her hand and thought of the early dead. No thought but of pity and sorrow entered her mind, as she listened to Colonel Arendell's account of her lingering and painful illness and death.

All retired early to rest. Aldeane went in to look at Leonore. She still slept, breathing heavily, and turning restlessly. Aldeane sighed as she marked these and other symptoms of the fell disease that had marked her for its victim. She remembered Annie, and shuddered to think that this beautiful and amiable young creature so soon also would sleep the last long sleep that knows no earthly waking.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DROOPING FLOWER FADES.

A FEW days after the return of the travelers Frank went back to school, while Eddie and Jessie resumed their wonted avocations in the school-room. The hours of study were shortened, in order that Aldeane might frequently be with Leonore, who seemed never so happy as when in her company.

As the warm spring days came on, they took many a lingering walk along the banks of the river, resting, when Leonore grew weary, beneath some freshly budding tree, listening with pensive feelings to the waves that rippled by, and to the birds that caroled forth the joy that dwelt in their hearts in songs of praise to their Maker. Many a strange old legend, or quaint story, Aldeane related to awaken the interest and smiles of her drooping auditor; many a sweet poem did she read, and her voice often rose in tender melody to cheer her for whom tale, or poem, or song no longer possessed a charm. But with—

"A feeling of sadness, and longing
That is nor akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only,
As the mist resembles the rain,"

she would lay her head in Aldeane's lap, and speak of death, and long for it.

The beauty of the budding year was typical to her of the far exceeding loveliness of the heavenly land. She longed to wander beside the river of life, and pluck the

everlasting flowers. She had prepared her soul for the great change that had come upon her. She had knelt at the Saviour's feet, and drawn consolation and faith from His teachings. The Bible was the only volume upon which she now looked with pleasure, or from which Aldeane could draw aught to arouse her feelings, and compose her mind.

As the months fled, the tender watchers around her saw that she was quickly passing away. Gently, and without pain, she was hastening downward to the tomb; hastily her frail bark was gliding down the river of life, and nearing the dark shores of eternity, but to her they were fair and beautiful; the house of her God in all its celestial grandeur stood ready to receive her, and angels to bear to its inmost courts. Ere May had scattered all its wealth of beauty over the earth, Leonore lay down upon her couch, never more to tread the paths now redolent with sweets, or to gaze upon the luxuriance of the blushing month.

Too weak to sit up unless supported by pillows, she reclined upon her bed, which was drawn close to the window, that she might breathe the sweet fragrance from the garden below, and catch glimpses of its beauty.

Altogether released from the duties of the school-room, Aldeane remained constantly with her, devoting herself to the task of attending upon her, night and day she was alike at her post, snatching a few moments' sleep at uncertain intervals, and seeking air only when she ran into the garden at early morn, to cull the sweetest buds for the invalid when the dew was still upon them. No other seemed to smooth the pillows so well, or to prepare each little dainty so delicately; no voice was toned so low, yet so distinctly as hers, and above all, none, not even her tender mother, seemed so well to understand her bruised heart, and to guard its secrets so carefully. When Aldeane left the room, she would never speak of

her, but rest her gaze upon the door, and when she would enter, a smile would light up her pale face, speaking plainly of her satisfaction.

She endeavored in every way to console her parents for the irreparable loss they were about to sustain. She talked to them of heaven in her untaught eloquence, speaking powerfully to their hearts of her confident assurance of a heavenly inheritance, entreating them to meet her there. After such conversations, which on account of her extreme weakness were not frequent, they left her feeling as if an angel had spoken.

She said little of George Raymond. She felt that mention of his name caused feeling of the deepest pain to her parents, as they justly considered him the principal cause of her early death. A few days before her death, she begged them to exonerate him from all blame, as she was perfectly happy in the thought of meeting him and them in an ever-glorious and endless eternity. She asked that the little writing-desk he had given her might be brought to her, and for a short time, until her strength gave way, she each day wrote a few lines. The letter at last was finished, and she gave it to her father, begging him not to open it until after her death and burial, and that then the will therein contained should be faithfully executed. With a bursting heart he gave the required promise, and with a heavenly smile irradiating her features, she turned her face from the beauties of the world around her, as if all her earthly cares were ended, and she was ready to die.

She now continued rapidly to decline; the vital spark seemed scarce to glow, so faintly was it seen. Calmly, powerlessly, she awaited the approach of Azrael; his dark wings were poised above her, and the shadow of his coming lay upon her brow. The physicians had assured the family that only a few hours of life remained to her, and at nightfall a stricken group gathered in her

room. Frank had been recalled from school, and as usual he came in with the other children to bid Leonore good-night. The parting was more tender than usual. Eddie and Jessie went away weeping silently with a bitter pain they could not understand grasping their young hearts. Frank, struck by the coldness of the hand he held, and the spiritual beauty of the wan face, whispered to his mother:—

“I can not go; please let me stay.”

She nodded assent, and he took his station at the foot of the bed, watching intently every change that passed over his sister's face.

A dim taper burned at one end of the room; the moon shone brightly through the windows from which the curtains had been drawn back, that Leonore might once more gaze upon the glorious effulgence of the summer night. The silvery rays lay lightly upon the form of the dying girl, and over the silent group gathered around her.

The family physician with Colonel Arendell stood at the head of the bed, while Aldeane and Mrs. Arendell sat one on each side, often moving noiselessly from their stations to bring some strengthening draught or restorative. Leonore lay quietly breathing her life away; her eyes gazing steadily forward, their luster each moment growing fainter. Her mind seemed entirely gone. The doctor administered a powerful stimulant, which for a short time aroused her dormant faculties. She recognized those who stood near her, and calmly bade them farewell, giving to each some word of cheer, and as they wept feebly exhorted them not to grieve, for she was about to enter into eternal bliss, where she should never more feel sorrow or pain. Aldeane she sweetly thanked for all her care and love, and clasping her arms around her begged that she would repeat the psalm she had herself read to dying Abel. Though tears choked her voice, Aldeane

complied, and then sang a sweet and favorite hymn, but Leonore again sank into a state of apparent insensibility; all expected to see her spirit take its flight; she lay so still that they almost believed her already dead. The light was fading from her eyes, but once more they were lighted up, the deep-toned clock upon the staircase rang forth the hour of nine. She started slightly from her pillow, and cried faintly:—

“George, my darling, wait for me! The storm rushes by, and the water is deep; clasp me in your arms, and we will brave the torrent together!”

She then sank back, exhausted by the effort. All for the first time remembered that this was the anniversary of the day of George Raymond’s death, and about the hour that Mr. Blake had heard his voice in the storm. To her dying imagination had been clearly presented all the horrors of the awful scene.

All knelt around the bed, and the words of prayer arose amid the sobs of the mourners. The voice of the heart-broken was deep with anguish as he petitioned eternal felicity for his child, and comfort for those who were to be bereaved.

They arose from their knees and gazed once more upon the dying girl. Her face for a moment became glorious, and her lips moved. Colonel Arendell bent eagerly forward and caught the whisper, “With thee! in heaven at last!”

The light faded from her eyes, her brow grew dark, and her father covered his face with his hands, that he might not see her die. Sobs alone broke the stillness. For a few moments not a voice was heard; then arose that of the doctor, who had bent over her, saying:—

“She sleeps in Jesus.”

Her spirit had indeed returned to the God who gave it. Leonore Arendell was numbered with the angels.

"For her the heavenly gate was moved so gently from its portal,
The tender watchers scarcely knew when she became immortal."

A wail of agony broke from each desolate heart. Not a tear dropped from Colonel Arendell as he bent in stony grief over the form of his beloved child. Mrs. Arendell, on the contrary, gave vent to the most heart-rending cries; with their arms around each other, Frank and she wept heart-brokenly. Calm and self-possessed, though grieving even as deeply as they, Aldeane turned from the beautiful dead to comfort the mourners. She soon succeeded in getting them from the room; to Colonel Arendell she could say nothing. The deepest agony was depicted upon his countenance. The doctor took his arm to lead him away; he looked up wildly, and a low, bitter moan broke from his lips.

"My dear colonel, I beg you to come away!" said the kind-hearted gentleman. "Think of your wife—how much she needs your support at this trying hour."

Here a servant entered, and said that Mrs. Arendell was in violent hysterics. With a word of entreaty to the colonel, he left the room. Bending to impress one long, lingering kiss upon the sweetly smiling lips of his dead daughter, the desolate father left the chamber, and a moment afterward Aldeane heard the clang of the library door, and knew that he had shut himself in to indulge his speechless grief.

A number of servants had crowded into the room, and were loudly lamenting the death of their young mistress. Almost distracted by the confusion that prevailed, Aldeane ordered all but Aunt Roxy and Zettie to leave the room. Slowly and sorrowfully they obeyed, and those that remained were ere long engaged in the sacred task of robing the dead for burial. They found one hand resting upon her bosom, tight clasping the miniature of Raymond; it was not withdrawn, but permitted still to rest upon the heart that had cherished the original so long and fatally.

As Leonore had desired, the garments that had been prepared for her wedding formed those of the grave. When all was finished, Aldeane left the room, with the intention of going to her own. In the hall she met Doctor Grey; he told her that Mrs. Arendell was sleeping quietly from the effects of the potion he had administered. He begged her to try to obtain rest; but though she went into her chamber, it was not to seek sleep, but to pray for strength and comfort; then bathing her burning face and hands, she returned to the death-chamber to keep watch beside the beautiful clay of Leonore.

A dim light shone in the room as she entered. The servants, silently and tearfully, stood near the door. The sheet was drawn down, revealing the beautiful form of Leonore arrayed in pearly silk and costly lace; the hands, folded upon the breast, were waxen and white, but a faint tint rested upon lips and cheeks, giving almost the warmth of life to the immovable features. Colonel Arendell knelt beside the low couch, one arm thrown over the body, in an attitude of utter abandonment. At the sound of Aldeane's well-known footsteps, he lifted his head. His face was wonderfully changed by grief. In a few hours he seemed to have grown years older. Wearily he arose. Noticing Aldeane's pale and tear-stained countenance, a feeling of pity for her entered his heart. Taking her hand, he led her to the side of the bed.

"You, too," he said, "have come to grieve over this precious child! O God! why was the retribution so heavy!" A groan completed the sentence, and he sank into a chair, covering his face with his quivering hands.

Aldeane went to the other side of the bed and sat down, leaning her head upon her hand, and fixing her eyes upon the calm, sweet face of the precious dead. Thus began the long, silent vigil of the two mourners, that ended not till—

"The stars went softly back to heaven,
The night fogs rolled away,
And rims of gold and crowns of crimson
Along the hill-tops lay."

Two days later they placed Leonore Arendell—she who, in each loving soul, was named the broken-hearted—beside her lover. And for months, no gleam of joy dwelt in Arendell House. Yet even the saddest there could not but feel that to her who was taken the change was glorious; for had she lived it would have been as a broken-hearted woman. She had not been blessed with the strength of mind which would have enabled her to rise above the terrible sorrow that had fallen upon her young life. And knowing all this, resignation tempered the grief of her friends; not such resignation as is but another name for callousness, but that which through tears exclaims, "The Lord knoweth best. The will of the Lord be done."

And it was with such feelings as these Aldeane penned the following lines, lines which, perhaps, comforted more than any other words could have done, the bruised heart of the remorseful and penitent father. He called them his comfort, but the writer named them—

"THE ANGEL DEATH.

"The gates of Heaven ope'd wide one day,
And an angel left its peaceful shade,
And sped to earth his quiet way.
Full mournful was his solemn lay,
Like spirit moanings as they fade.

"Sable and glistening were his wings,
And shadows ever around him dwelt.
As coldness which the autumn brings,
When early frost around it clings,
So was the angel's presence felt.

- "The silvery tresses of the moon
Lay on the bosom of the quiet air,
A web of tracery, that soon
Would vanish in the deep'ning gloom,
That comes before the daylight fair.
- "The angel with his powerful hands
The beauteous radiance quickly cleft,
And far behind him lay the bands,
Like shadows on the desert sands,
Of rolling darkness he had left.
- "He touched the golden harp he bore—
And lingering numbers sweet and low,
Whispered to earth the mystic lore,
By which the seraphs God implore
Mercy on erring man below.
- "To one on earth that sound was heard,
And smiles of peace passed o'er her face—
Like clearest notes of joyous bird,
She seemed to hear the heavenly word—
'Come rest ye, child of love and grace'
- "She lay upon her couch so fair;
Bright through the casement looked the moon,
And bars of silver on her hair,
Gleamed softly white and strangely there,
Like sunbeams through a darkened room.
- "She knew that through the casement low,
Came in the angel—Death,
She heard the rush of his dark wings slow,
She saw strange light around him glow,
And felt his withering breath.
- "Her hands were clasped upon her breast—
Her eyes looked up to heaven;
She knew not those who round her pressed
She saw alone her endless rest—
Her thoughts from earth were riven.

"Bitter they wept on earth that night ;
For the spirit so lovely and kind,
Had taken to God its joyous flight—
To its home of beauty and ceaseless light—
And had left but a smile behind."

CHAPTER XXXII.

RETRIBUTION BEGINS.

THE summer came slowly on, casting its wealth of fragrance and beauty over the earth, little heeded by those at Arendell House. Death falls with a shock upon loving hearts, and though long expected, it had not failed to make its due impression there. Still so deeply was Leonore mourned, that a solemn feeling of loneliness hung over all. Mrs. Arendell spoke of her with quiet tears; Aldeane thought of her very sorrowfully; but Colonel Arendell seemed totally changed by grief.

——— “The sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
Lay deep 'neath a surface pure and smooth—
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.”

Calmly and gently, never mentioning her, for whom he grieved so deeply, he attended to his duties. More frequently than ever he retired to his library, where, as she passed the windows, Aldeane would see him with his face buried in his hands, or with weary steps pacing the apartment. Often, too, he went to Leonore's grave, and passed the closing hours of day in lonely reverie. Not all the gentle wiles of his wife and children could win him from the over-mastering grief for the loss of the child of his first love.

To Aldeane the days passed drearily. Stillness and sorrow at home, required the brightness of joy from without, to cheer and comfort her; but this came not. Each letter from Arthur brought some fresh tale of dis-

aster. Nevins was at work most bitterly against him. The unfortunate loss of a most important case, turned the popular tide still more against him. Mr. Halcombe had withdrawn from the firm, and was his successful rival. Arthur was perfectly discouraged, and even Mr. Ashton had begun to despair of his ultimate success. It was concluded that Arthur must leave Boston and seek prosperity elsewhere. With many tears, Belle heard this decision, and for some time could not consent to give up her beautiful new home, and find a lowlier elsewhere: but for even this she was prepared, when a most unexpected event turn the tide of affairs.

A rumor was whispered in Boston one day, that the wealthy and aristocratic Jonas Nevins had been arrested. None knew for what. The voice grew louder and louder, and at last the astounding intelligence spread over the city, that the alleged crime was perjury.

Arthur Guthrie was not seen much upon the streets at this time, for he shunned inquiry, but the curious public, interested as they suddenly became upon his affairs, would have been far more so, had they known that the gentleman, who frequented his house in company with Mr. Ashton and Charles Evans, was the mysterious prosecutor of the renowned Jonas Nevins.

Aldeane was, of course, immediately apprised of what had occurred, or at least as much of it as was known to the public. Arthur, for reasons best known to himself, kept back many particulars, which she intuitively felt he could have disclosed, and which materially heightened the curiosity and anxiety she felt concerning this unlooked-for event.

A few days after she received the news, Colonel Arendell entered the house, in a state of great excitement, and passing Aldeane upon the stairs, without, in his distraction, perceiving her, he opened the door of his wife's room, and said, in a sort of horrified whisper:—

"Ida! Ida, William is coming home! My brother is coming!"

There was an exclamation of the greatest surprise from Mrs. Arendell, then Aldeane heard no more, but that little convinced her that a mystery existed in the family of which she had hitherto been perfectly ignorant. She remembered that she had occasionally heard of a William Arendell, especially at the time of the discovery of George Raymond's parentage; but she had always supposed him dead. She remembered well that she had found the picture of a young man under a file of old papers in the library, whose frank handsome countenance had deeply interested her, and that it was lying on the parlor table when George Raymond arrived, and that he looked at it, sometimes sorrowfully, but often with the glare of wild passion that so frequently overspread his face. After his death the picture had disappeared, and she had accounted for it, by supposing that it raised too many sad memories of his dead son. But that this William Arendell still existed, she had never for a moment imagined, and to know the cause of his long exile was now the greatest desire of her mind.

Neither the colonel or Mrs. Arendell mentioned the subject when they saw her, and this increased her astonishment, and wish to penetrate the mystery.

"Surely," thought she, "if the return of this long-lost brother was the occasion of joy to Colonel Arendell, he would immediately communicate the good news to his friends and acquaintance. I have not heard him even speak his name. It is indeed most strange."

Several days had passed. Colonel Arendell had become still more morose and gloomy, and his wife wore an anxious look. Aldeane had received no letter from Arthur, at which she was greatly surprised, as he had given her no particulars of the arrest of Nevins, and she awaited them with the utmost impatience. So much

engrossed were the Arendells in their own secret, that they did not notice that any thing weighed on Aldeane's mind. She had intended to tell them of Nevins's arrest, but the shame attached to it, and her ignorance of all particulars, had withheld her from doing so.

The August sun had climbed the zenith, and the family had retired to different parts of the house to seek quiet and shade. At the end of the front piazza was a little arbor formed of many a flowering shrub that crept over the lattice; a little rustic seat had been placed there, and many hours had Leonore and Aldeane spent there together. Thither, with a favorite book for company, Aldeane now retired, and in the most remote corner, where she could see no one without, nor be seen by them, she sat down. From the perusal of a beautiful poem, she fell into a tender train of thought. Her brother, Belle, Leonore, and Frederic Morgan, one by one passed through the shadowy vista of her mind. She had fallen into a day-dream of unusual richness and beauty, when she was startled by the tones of well-known voices. One she instantly recognized as Colonel Arendell's, the other, though perfectly familiar to her, she could give to none of her present acquaintances. It seemed to lead her a long way back into the past, and to scenes altogether different from the South. Where could she have heard it? She arose to leave the little alcove, but remembered that the only entrance was near the end of the piazza, and that she would be surely seen by the gentlemen; she looked down at her disordered dress, and while she stood in doubt, not knowing what to do, she heard the stranger say:—

"Yes, colonel, your brother has arrived, and the man who for years has stained his name with infamy is secured within the jail at Loring, to await his trial at the coming sessions."

"You of course are aware," said the colonel, "that I

shall be delighted if the innocence of my brother can be proved. Although through his lawyer I was made aware of his return to this country, I was perfectly unprepared for such an event as this. But I beg of you, sir, to give me the name of the man whom you assert to be the real criminal."

"Davis," replied the stranger, whose voice each moment perplexed Aldeane still more, as afraid to move she remained an unwilling listener to the conversation of the two gentlemen, who were hidden from her view by the thick shrubbery.

"Davis!" reiterated Colonel Arendell. "What! not Jonas Davis, our old friend? It is impossible!"

"It is perfectly true," returned the gentleman, quietly. "Jonas Nevins Davis, for years known as Jonas Nevins, is now in Loring jail, occupying the very cell in which your brother was confined more than twenty years ago."

Overcome with astonishment, Aldeane thrust her hand through the clustering vines, and by a violent effort tearing them aside saw standing before her, Mr. Ashton.

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet she could not have been more surprised. "How came he there, to herald to Colonel Arendell the return of his wandering brother?"

At the sound of her low, involuntary scream, and the crashing of the vines, they had started to their feet. Colonel Arendell regarded her with a look of angry defiance, and Mr. Ashton hastened to her side, leading her like one in a dream from the arbor, making eager inquiries concerning her health, and assuring her that their enemy had fallen, never again to rise, and that justice would be done to all at last.

Colonel Arendell excitedly demanded how she came there.

In a trembling voice she explained; but he seemed but half satisfied, and turned away, muttering, "Women are everywhere, hearing every thing!"

Her curiosity and anxiety were smothered by her resentment of this conduct, so she turned to depart. Mr. Ashton wished to detain her, but she swept proudly by him.

He demanded hastily, "When can I see you, to give you all particulars?"

"At almost any time," she answered. "Colonel Arendell must suppose that I am deeply interested in that which concerns all who are dear to me."

He turned ashy pale, and leaning against a pillar of the piazza, waved his hand for her to go.

Noticing this deep emotion, Aldeane concluded that the subject was in reality very painful to him, and immediately left them.

The whole of that day and night was passed by her in a state of most intolerable suspense. She saw Colonel Arendell but once, and then he preserved the most impenetrable silence on the subject nearest the thoughts of both, and Aldeane was unwilling to risk his displeasure by mentioning it.

The next morning she awaited impatiently a visit from Mr. Ashton. She could not conceive how he had become acquainted with William Arendell, or why he should be so much interested in his case as to accompany him South. A hundred wild conjectures floated through her mind, but none were satisfactory. She remained in an indescribable state of mysterious anxiety, starting every time the gates creaked on their hinges, or a footstep sounded upon the piazza. Colonel Arendell left the house early in the morning, expecting that Mr. Ashton would come, and feeling very unwilling to meet him. The hours, to Aldeane, passed wearily. The exercises of the school-room seemed unusually dull. Eddie and Jessie could not comprehend the lassitude of their teacher, and as a matter of course they were stupid and inattentive, annoying and worrying her exceedingly.

A feeling of joyful relief came over all when Zettie came in and announced: "A gentleman in the parlor to see Miss Aldeane."

She sprang up quickly, and was soon returning the warm greeting of Mr. Ashton.

"Why did you come South? What do you know of this Mr. William Arendell?" were her first questions.

"To answer you fully, Aldeane, I must take you back some twenty years," he answered. "Come, sit down beside me, on the sofa. I do not think the story will tire you."

She took a seat and waited with considerable impatience for him to begin. He walked up and down before her several times in deep thought, then seating himself beside her, and smoothing gravely his gray and flowing beard, commenced:—

"It is now about twenty years ago that I made a voyage to England. I had left my young wife and child most reluctantly, to go there on very important business. For some days I made no acquaintances, most of those aboard being of an inferior class. At last I noticed a fine-looking man, of about my own age, who seemed imbued with the deepest melancholy. He would remain for hours at the side of the ship, with his eyes fastened upon the rolling waves, expressive of thoughts as wild and fathomless as they. His seemingly desolate condition interested and touched me with pity. Moved by a strong impulse which I could not resist, I one day spoke to him. He replied courteously, but coldly; but I was determined not to be so easily put off, and again addressed him. The acquaintance thus commenced progressed very slowly; but the voyage proving long and tempestuous, we were thrown entirely on one another for society, and being naturally of a sociable nature, he at last unbent before my frequent advances, and ere the end of the voyage we had become friends.

"I knew that a mystery hung over his life. As yet I knew not the place of his residence, whether he were married or single, or even his name. I longed to penetrate the gloom that hung over him, and win his confidence, but all my endeavors seemed in vain. Delicacy forbade rude intrusion upon his secret, and the sorrow which marked his life excited daily my pity, while the manliness of his character aroused my admiration and esteem.

"At length, amid general rejoicing, we entered the Mersey, and on the morrow would land. A bright moon hung over Liverpool, revealing to us the dark streets of the city which we were about to enter. My unknown friend and I slowly and sorrowfully paced the deck together. Little was said by either. I felt sincere pain at parting with this man, who seemed so truly miserable, and whom in so short a time I had learned so deeply to respect. His thoughts, also, seemed to be of a sorrowful character, for I saw his face working painfully in the moonlight, while he would occasionally sigh deeply, as if his very soul was in strife with some mighty weight of shame and grief.

"He stopped at last, placing his elbows on the side of the ship, and covering his face with his hands. I fancy I can see him now. The hands were delicate and white, and trembled nervously as they closed over his dark face, shaded darkly by the black hair that fell over them. I regarded him for a moment in sorrowful astonishment, then laid my hand upon his arm in silent sympathy.

"The touch aroused him; turning, he placed his arm again within mine, and we recommenced our silent walk. I longed to know his troubles, and to comfort him, yet shrank from asking his confidence. He seemed struggling violently with his pride, for ever and anon he would open his lips as if to speak, then close them again with a look of agony.

"My sympathy at length overcame every other consideration. I could not longer remain silent, and see this man, whom I had learned to esteem, suffer so deeply in my presence, without seeking to comfort him.

"My friend," I said, for I knew not his name, 'you are in trouble—some weighty sorrow is oppressing your heart. Can I not help or comfort you?'

"I had expected a sorrowful answer; I had prepared myself for a sad scene, but not for that which really occurred. He dropped my arm, and leaning against the bulwarks, covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears. I was astounded to see the strong man before me weeping like a very child, but in the deep anguish of a man's wounded heart, I stood irresolute, not knowing what to say or do, and while I pondered, the storm of passion passed away, and he looked up, saying:—

"I know you despise me after this exhibition of weakness; but, indeed, mine is a bitter lot!"

"I know that!" I replied, standing beside him, and clasping his hand, 'and I conjure you, if you have any faith in my honor, or reliance upon my friendship, to let me know your griefs, that, if possible, I may alleviate them.'

"That you can not do!" he replied, sighing deeply, but you shall know my story, though I fear to tell it to you, lest I thereby lose the only friend I have on earth.'

"I earnestly assured him, that whatever he should state, I should consider more his misfortune than his fault, and after a few moments' reflection, he commenced the story of his life. Afterward, he wrote the sad tale out in nearly the same words, as those in which he had told it to me, and this statement, Aldeane, I am about to place in your hands, together with the proofs of William Arendell's innocence, and Jonas Nevins Davis's guilt, which it has been the work of years to collect. Read

them to-night, my dear, and I will advise with you as to the part you may be called upon to take in this affair."

Mr. Ashton said much more, but what it was, Aldeane, in her confused state, could not tell, and it was long after he had bidden her farewell, that she found courage to look upon the documents he had left in her hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WILLIAM ARENDELL'S NARRATIVE.

ALDEANE GUTHRIE did not wait for night to come, ere she hurried to her room, and eagerly bent herself to the perusal of the record which had been confided to her, wondering by what strange fatality it had been made her lot to be made the repository of secrets, which, like those of Raymond, this William Arendell's unfortunate son, apparently affected her so little.

But her curiosity hastily silenced these reflections, and she opened the manuscript, which was marked for her earliest perusal, and read the tale which had been told to Mr. Ashton upon the deck of the vessel more than twenty years before.

"My name," it began, "is William Arendell. I am a native of North Carolina. My mother died when I was a child of five years old, and my father about fifteen years later. I inherited the paternal estate called Grassmere, and my younger brother, John, one not less valuable, some ten miles distant. Thus we were placed, with an equal number of slaves, and an equal amount of land and money. I need say no more, except that John was quiet and frugal, and I his opposite—an unworthy elder brother—I know; yet I was not base at heart, but, O, God! so weak, weak, weak.

"When I became master at Grassmere, there was a beautiful slave girl there—a quadroon—and one of the most lovely creatures of her race. Her beauty inspired

me with—— a passion of which I now blush to speak. It was not long before I discovered that she loved me with her whole heart and soul. What need have I to say more? She was a slave, I the master whom she worshipped. A child was born to us, the image of myself, and my heart went out to him with the purest, tenderest love. Sweet child; dear little Junius!" he paused, as if overcome by emotion, but presently continued:—

"Meanwhile, my brother had married. His wife had been much admired for her beauty, and among others I had bowed at her shrine, but soon discovering her fiendish disposition and horrible temper had left her in disgust. Unfortunately, I, who detested her, had inspired her with love, and her fury was fully aroused when she found it hopeless. For some time she employed her most seductive arts to win me back; but all in vain. Meanwhile, John had become deeply enamored of her. I warned and remonstrated with him, but only excited his anger and jealousy. For some time she scorned his suit, but he continued it with the most ardent pertinacity, and at length, to my great sorrow and surprise, she accepted him, and very shortly afterward became his wife.

"After my father's death, I led, what is usually termed the life of a fast young man. I had money, and I scattered it freely, and was greatly surprised, when I found that it was not only exhaustible, but that I was in reality deeply in debt. I applied to my brother for relief, and he granted it, instructing his overseer, Richard Blake, to supply me with the funds I required. My sister-in-law at the same time pretended the greatest solicitude in my behalf.

"About this time, I became acquainted with a young lady—a resident of another county, named Alice Deane. I——"

Aldeane paused, and clasped her hands in amazement, or perhaps more correctly a species of affright, ejaculated,

"My aunt, Alice Deane!" and then breathlessly resumed her reading.

"I soon loved her devotedly. My passion for the beautiful quadron died before the pure loveliness of this fair creature. She was loved by another, who swore vengeance upon whomsoever should take her from him. I laughed at his threats, yet for the sake of Samira's child, whom I still loved devotedly, I for some time resisted the fascinations of her beauty, but at last disclosed my feelings, and with a heart throbbing with ecstasy, heard that they were reciprocated. Sorrowfully, I told her, that wild and dissipated as I was, I was most unfit to be the companion of so pure a creature. But she would not believe her idol clay, and with truest faith gave me her heart.

"Ere long we were married, and shortly afterward she knew all, but instead of loathing me and hating my child, she conceived for him a strong affection, and for a time I was perfectly happy in beholding the felicity of the wife and child I adored.

"But, alas! enemies were plotting my destruction! The words of Davis had not been lightly spoken. I had paid all, except one small installment, of what I had borrowed of my brother, for by the most rigid economy, and a most fortunate speculation in tobacco, I had gained in one year nearly as much as I had expended in twelve. I neglected to obtain receipts from the overseer of those payments, but, of course, John knows of them, and will act justly in connection with the proper officials in the disposition of my estate.

"One day, about two years after my marriage, on returning from Linden, a village two miles distant, to my house, what was my surprise to see several officers of the law scattered in different parts of the house and grounds. There had been a robbery committed the night before on the Loring bank—a window having been entered, and the

safe forced open; and my first impression was that they were resting at my house on their way to apprehend the suspected party. I saluted them carelessly, and one approached, placing his hand upon my shoulder, arresting me for the robbery of the bank.

"Had a meteor descended from heaven and burst before me I could not have been more horrified and astounded. My poor wife threw her arms around me, shrieking wildly with terror. While endeavoring to soothe and assure her, I myself became calm. Quick as a lightning flash the truth burst upon me! Davis was cashier of the bank, and I doubted not, had brought this accusation against me, in order to fulfill his diabolical threats of ruining me. Until now I had quite forgotten them, for he had always greeted me cordially when we met, and in that neighborhood had never given utterance to a single word against me. But I did not for a moment suppose but that I should be able to prove his villainy, and the falseness of the charge.

"I demanded of the officer the reason of my arrest. He could give none, except that it was by the order of the sheriff of the county. He treated me very respectfully, but said that he had orders to search the house. I readily agreed to this, and accompanied him through every room. The last we visited was the library. This they thoroughly searched. There was a small safe in one corner, which contained many valuable papers, many of which I was most anxious should not be seen by those men, for they related to my bachelor days, many of which were spent in gayety and dissipation of which I was then heartily ashamed.

"Involuntarily I placed myself before it to screen it from observation. The movement attracted the notice of the officers, and one demanded the key. I looked for it in the accustomed place, it was not there. My God! who had touched that key; who had tampered with the

lock of the safe? I felt lost when I asked myself that question. Some one picked up the key from the floor, and held it up to me.

“‘That is the key,’ I said, ‘but I assure you that the safe contains nothing but valuable papers.’

“‘That may be,’ he replied. ‘Nevertheless, I must act according to orders, and search every place.’

“I awaited in trembling anxiety for the conclusion of the search. Package after package of papers were removed and untied, and the search was nearly concluded, when an exclamation of surprise was uttered by one of the men. I bent forward, and to my horror and surprise, saw a large sum in gold, and a few bank notes lying in one corner. With a malicious smile one of the men gathered them up and examined them. ‘This answers the description of the stolen money!’ he said.

“‘Villain! of what do you accuse me?’ I exclaimed, springing upon him. I was seized by a number of the officers, and struggled wildly with them, thus injuring my cause, by impressing them with the belief that I wished to escape.

“This had never entered my mind. Though perfectly overwhelmed at the sight of the money, the idea that I could not clear myself readily of the accusation brought against me, never once occurred to me.

“My wife had fainted in my arms, and I stood in abject misery when my brother rode up to the door, and hearing from one of the officers that I was arrested, sprang into the library, demanding what it all meant.

“I was so utterly stunned by what had befallen me, and by the sight of my unconscious wife, that I scarcely noticed his presence. One of the men, pointing to the money, hastily gave an explanation, and foaming with rage he turned toward me:—

“‘So this is the end!’ he exclaimed, ‘after years of wildness and dissipation, you end your career by robbery!’

“‘John,’ I returned, in horror, ‘you do not believe me guilty?’

“‘And why not?’ he asked with a sneer. ‘Why not? There,’ pointing to the money, ‘is the proof! Good heavens, that I should live to see my brother accused of such a crime, and to hear my name a by-word and a disgrace!’

“My brain seemed on fire as I heard those words. My own brother had condemned me already in presence of all these witnesses. I left my wife to the care of the servants, and rose up. ‘John, come away from here, where I can speak to you unreservedly.’ I strode out to the porch, followed by the officers and my brother.

“‘I came up to have some private conversation of an important nature with you,’ said John. ‘But I suppose that will not be allowed.’

“One of the officers, after a short consultation with the others, said that they would have no objection to our having a short private conversation, provided that it took place where we could be seen.

“‘Place your men in the garden wherever you please!’ I said. ‘I know too well my innocence to attempt to escape, still it is your duty to watch me. You see yonder arbor?’ pointing to one that stood in the garden, overrun with a wild trumpet-vine, ‘let us go there. You can easily watch us.’

“They assented, and we walked to the arbor that for years had been my favorite seat. My brother angrily demanded an explanation of what had passed. I could give him none except that relative to Davis, and earnestly protest my innocence.

“He smiled incredulously. ‘Why, then, did you write that letter to Holland?’ he asked.

“‘What letter?’ I exclaimed, in surprise, for I had not written to my friend Ralph Holland, who had gone to England on a bridal tour, for several weeks, and could

not conceive what possible connection my correspondence with him could have with my arrest.

“‘The one discovered in your portfolio this morning!’

“‘This morning!’ I repeated, in astonishment. ‘There was none there addressed to Holland!’

“‘It is false!’ he returned, fiercely. ‘It was discovered this morning at the same time as the stolen money. You know well its contents!’

“‘As I live, I know nothing of it!’ I replied, much enraged at his taunting words and manner. ‘What did you come to me to-day for? Do you want the little money I owe you?’

“‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘but I suppose I shall not get it!’

“‘That you will not. I have not such a large sum in the house, and what I have I shall leave for my wife’s use.’

“Many words of a similar nature passed. John seemed beside himself with anger. He would not for a moment credit my innocence, and we parted with feelings of hatred and distrust on both sides. He strode from the arbor, and galloped away, and bidding farewell to my lovely wife, I went to Loring, and was there subjected to an examination, in which, as I suspected, Davis and Blake were the chief persons who appeared against me. A few friends became security for my appearance, and I impatiently awaited my trial, which was to take place in a few weeks.

“Oh! my friend, how drearily that time passed! The pleasure that, even in my distress, I should have enjoyed in my wife’s society, was marred by the traces of care and suffering that rested upon her lovely face, now fast growing pale and attenuated. My brother John and his wife came once to see us. I thought that a gleam of exultation lighted up her dark eyes as she looked upon my misery, but in a moment it was gone, and when she spoke, it was in the sweetest accents, assuring me that, though

appearances were against me, she believed that a horrible plot had been laid for my destruction, and that I was perfectly innocent.

"John walked impatiently up and down during the interview. We had neither of us recovered from the anger in which we had parted, and he spoke but once, and then to mutter:—

"‘Davis is a man to be trusted. Blake’s testimony, also, is to be believed in every particular!’

"I replied, angrily, that money would do any thing; that as for Davis, he would swear his soul away to gratify his revenge, for that I was confident he hated me. ‘You well know that he loved my wife, and swore to ruin me when I married her!’ I concluded, earnestly.

"‘Love is a dreadful thing!’ said Mrs. Arendell, softly. ‘Love is the demon that steals our souls.’

"‘Has it stolen yours?’ I asked, abruptly, raising my eyes to hers.

"She turned slightly pale. ‘Why, what a question, William! Of course it hasn’t!’ She arose to go, and said, as she bade me farewell:—

"‘I shall call on Alice often! I wish you would let her go home with me now. I suppose she would be very unwilling to leave you; but I really think it would be better for her. This constant excitement is enough to kill her; she needs every attention at this time.’

"For a moment I was deceived by the suavity of her manner. I felt choked with emotion at this mention of my wife, with whom I had rejoiced over the prospect of the possession of a tie which should bind us even more closely together. I now shuddered that it might be the child of a condemned felon, who would be the object of pity instead of pride, and who would grow up in detestation of the name which it should revere and love. These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind. When I looked up at my brother’s wife, a slight sneer curled her

beautiful lips, and her eyes were looking coldly into mine, with an expression that curdled my very blood.

“‘I thought you were about to speak. Remember I am your friend! Shall I take Alice home with me or not?’

“I shuddered at the thought of my pure and gentle wife being in the power of that woman, and said quickly:—

“‘No. No, I thank you! She is better where she is. She would pine the more were she away from Grassmere.’

“A slight frown darkened her brow, and she bit her full, red lip. ‘Good-bye!’ she said, extending her hand.

“I touched it coldly, my brother bowed, and they went, leaving me to breathe with a feeling of freedom the air which her presence seemed to have contaminated.

“I can not speak of all that followed. Fancy to yourself the agony with which I heard myself condemned for a crime against which my very nature revolted. Davis and Blake, John’s overseer, were the chief witnesses against me. Oh! the dreadful perjury that was committed upon that fatal day! I can not now tell you half they said, but their testimony seemed to have no weak point; their evidence appeared perfectly plausible in every respect. I had been to a party on the night of the robbery, and returned part way home with them. No one knew what time I reached Grassmere, and that fact, and the gold found in my possession, with the forged letter to Holland, in which the writing was so exactly like my own that my own friends swore that it was, and in which I stated that, with cash in hand and the proceeds of my estate I should have enough to live well in England, whither I intended to go in order to bring up Junius as a white child, was testimony enough to doom me as a villain forever. It was well known that all my interests were in the South, and that I should never leave it except to conceal a crime, to defraud my creditors, or to educate

Junius. Many believed me to be deeply involved, and my affairs were in such a neglected condition that in the short time between my imprisonment and trial it was impossible for me so to arrange them as to prove the contrary. Many were greatly puzzled about the matter, but there was scarcely one that did not believe me guilty. Some strange infatuation, they argued, some hidden cause, had led me to commit the crime for which I was about to suffer.

“The unanimous verdict of the jury was ‘Guilty.’

“As the word was pronounced, a wild shriek rang through the court-house, and I saw my poor wife borne fainting away. She had come there in spite of my entreaties, hoping to hear for me a full acquittal. I was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, and thirty lashes at the public whipping-post!

“I was led into the prison, half bewildered by the horrible thoughts that crowded my mind, and nearly crazed by the dreary prospect before me. I was left alone, I—an Arendell, within the walls of a prison! The night came on, and still I sat with my burning head bowed in my hands, thinking, thinking, till my brain, aroused from its torpor, seemed glowing like fire. At midnight I arose, and walked to the little casement, resolved soon to escape, or perish in the attempt.

“The moonlight streamed in through the barred window, filling the little room with a pale weird light that calmed the raging tempest in my bosom. I grew calm beneath its influence, and until the gray dawning of morning reflected upon modes of escape. And at last arrived at the only practicable one. The vigil of the night brought to me hope, and such comfort, that when the first sunbeam stole in to gladden the darkness that surrounded me, I welcomed it, as the harbinger of liberty and peace.

“My wife came early in the morning to see me. I was

greatly shocked at the change that had taken place in her. Her light hair hung like a frame of dusky gold around her fair suffering face; her violet eyes looked drearily forth from beneath the blue-veined lids. Not a particle of color tinted her parched lips or cheeks, she looked indeed the personification of despair. She sank with a bitter moan into my arms as she entered, laying her throbbing head upon my bosom, while her heart beat violently upon my aching one.

"My husband! my husband!" she moaned. "Oh! why can not we die?" She drew Junius toward her. "Oh, that we could all lie down together now and be at rest!"

"Alice," I said, soothingly, "live, darling, for my sake!"

"I drew her into the farthest corner of the room, and as soon as she became sufficiently calm, disclosed to her my plans for escape. To her ardent imagination they seemed certain of success, and with a joyful heart she left me to prepare what I considered necessary. She came again the next day, for there was no obstacle interposed to prevent my seeing her at any time. No criminals had ever been confined in Loring before for any great offense, or for any length of time, and as no one had escaped, they supposed that the prison was secure, though in fact it was far from being so. Any man with ordinary strength of arm could break the slender bars across the windows, and force a passage out. A small chisel that my wife had brought facilitated my escape. The windows were at a great height from the ground, and at midnight, having severed noiselessly the bars, I looked down upon the quiet street with a shudder, for I knew that I would endanger my life in the spring I was about to make for freedom, but better death than imprisonment and the infamy of the lash. I thrust myself through the narrow casement, and looked up with an earnest though

voiceless prayer. The bright autumn moon was high in the blue heavens, the light fleecy clouds hovered around her, like pages in attendance on their queen. I glanced down the street. The tall trees waved gently in the faint breeze, and save the rustling of their foliage, and the shrill monotonous croaking of the frogs in a distant pond, all was still. Nothing but dark shadows stretching their dusky lengths upon the white houses and sandy walk, was stirring. All within the village were at rest. I looked again, and breathed the cool fresh air, and with it a stronger desire for liberty. I sprang from the casement to the street, and, though for an instant I felt almost paralyzed by the fearful shock, discovered with joy that I had sustained no injury. I looked cautiously around me. The little town was buried in slumber, not even a dog was stirring, and with a beating heart I walked hurriedly away. Some two miles were passed in an incredibly short space of time, and I entered a dark pine-wood. The moon was in the decline, and every thing within the shadowy grove was painfully indistinct. I could see nothing of those that I expected would be there. I stood for a moment in trembling expectation, and then with a thrill of joy I felt my hand clasped by the fingers of little Junius, and a moment after my wife was in my arms.

“‘Is all ready?’ I asked.

“‘All,’ she replied, placing in my hands a well-filled purse, and leading me a few steps farther into the forest, where my favorite Arrow, a very swift and valuable steed, was tied to a tree. He neighed with delight at seeing me, and I caressed the gentle creature, as the instrument that would in reality give me freedom.

“I gave my last directions to my sweet young wife, which were that she should dispose of the estate, settle with my few creditors, and as soon afterward as she was able to travel, to go to New York, where she would find

letters advising her of my whereabouts, and also directions for the future. Samira and Junius were of course to go with her. I could with difficulty separate myself from him. He entreated me most piteously to take him with me. Oh, if I had but listened to the pleadings of my own heart and his plaintive prayers, and yielded to them! but my wife begged me not to leave her all alone, and putting him resolutely away, I turned to bid her a last farewell. I shall never forget that last look. The pale moonbeams rested upon a face as white as marble; the blue eyes were dusky with unshed tears, a weight of agony seemed breaking her young spirit, and her white hands were pressed tightly over her heart, as if she fain would still forever its wild beating. A low moan passed her lips, as pressing her to my bosom, I kissed her again and again.

“‘Oh, my God! this is agony!’ she murmured.

“‘’Tis not forever my wife! ’tis not forever!’ I exclaimed, a dreadful foreboding at my heart the while. ‘My Alice, be brave. We shall soon meet again.’

“A hand of iron seemed pressing upon my heart. I could say no more, but with one burning kiss upon lips and brow, I placed her almost insensible on the sward; then throwing myself into the saddle, rode madly away, pursued by a hundred maddening thoughts that seemed to drive my mind to the very verge of insanity, and even to have an influence over my steed, for he bore me madly on, as if he knew that life or death depended on his efforts; and when the gray dawn stole over the gloom of night, I was far away safe from all pursuit. I reined in at an elegant mansion upon a fine plantation, where I was courteously entertained, although my host could not refrain from making some remarks of surprise and curiosity at my wild and haggard appearance. I took no notice of them, and after breakfast called for my horse, and again set forth. My friend, I need not tell you more of that

hurried flight; suffice it to say, that my faithful Arrow fell dead on the evening of the third day. I at last arrived in New York, and most anxiously awaited tidings of those I had left behind. For myself I felt no fears, as I knew I was out of danger of being retaken. I decided at last to go to England, where, by the aid of my friend, Holland, I might obtain a situation, in which I might again make for myself an honorable name. I was unwilling to leave without hearing one word from my wife, and actually had some idea of returning secretly to North Carolina, although I knew the enterprise would be attended with great danger.

"One day I picked up a paper, and after reading the news, casually glanced at the column of deaths; what was my horror to discover the name of my wife! With the most intense agony I read the paragraph. She had died in less than a week after I left her—she and my child; and so with naught to recall me to my native land, save the one hope of clearing my name of the foul blot cast upon it, the one purpose to which I devote my life, I go to seek strength for the contest, and years hence, perhaps, when that villain may grow careless in his fancied security, I may return to show him that my vengeance is grown strong in slumber."

Thus ended William Arendell's tale.

To this manuscript a few pages in Mr. Ashton's writing were added. Aldeane read with interest, just such a record as she would have expected of the writer, one of unfaltering trust and kindly aid.

"Dearest Aldeane," it commenced, "I heard this tale as I know you have read it; I could not say much to comfort him, save to assure him, that I would make his cause my own, and bring that villain to justice, if it were possible. I think in my young days, I must have been foolishly chivalrous, but however that may be, I loved that persecuted man like a brother, and during the short

time we were together, made myself acquainted with every peculiarity of his mind, or circumstance that could be turned to advantage.

"That his friend, Charles Holland, might be in Liverpool, and be able by his influence in business circles, to place him in some position of trust, became as much my hope as his; and resolving, if his friend's assistance was unobtainable, to give him such as was at my own command, I looked eagerly forward to our arrival in Liverpool.

"Upon our arrival in that city, we went together to a hotel, and to our joy found his friend, Charles Holland, there. He was awaiting the departure of the vessel, by which we had come, and which, by tempestuous weather, had been so long at sea, that she did not reach the port until after the appointed time for sailing.

"He was much surprised at seeing Mr. Arendell, and after listening to his tale, vented his indignation in such strong language, that I was still more fully persuaded of his entire innocence. On being left alone with Mr. Holland, I made minute inquiries concerning Mr. Arendell's past life, and found that he had in his despair, magnified his faults, and forgotten his good qualities. Mr. Holland expatiated warmly upon the generosity and nobleness of his disposition, and entirely repudiated the idea of even associating his name with crime.

"That satisfied me. 'We must do something for him, Mr. Holland!' I exclaimed, warmly. 'This persecuted gentleman must not be left to sink under the assaults of his vile enemies. He must live to triumph over them!'

"Mr. Holland grasped my hand heartily.

"'You are right!' he said. 'I had already thought of this, but what is to be done? Arendell has never devoted himself to business, you can see that by the careless manner he has conducted his own affairs. You may depend upon it, that child of his will never get one cent of

his property, or freedom, while Lucinda Arendell lives. Blind fool, to trust to his brother's integrity. Why, he is less than a child in her hands, she rules him, body and soul. Now if Arendell had any business talent—'

" 'Perhaps he has, but it never has been called forth. Poor man, he has but that one child to think of now, and perhaps if Arendell could be placed in a situation, he might at some time be rescued from bondage. The father now is certainly the greatest consideration.'

" 'That is true,' he replied, 'and I know that I could easily obtain a situation for him, if, as I said before, he had any talent for business.'

" 'It would come with the necessity for it,' I interposed, impatiently. 'His integrity you say, is or was, before this unfortunate affair, undoubted.'

" 'Certainly! I would trust him with untold millions now!'

" 'He is well educated,' I resumed, 'and as a man of honor he would not neglect the business of another as he has his own. On that point I believe you need have no fears.'

" 'There is reason in what you say,' said Holland. 'One thing is certain, Arendell's property is at present beyond his reach, and he must do something to support himself. Do you think he would object to going to India?'

" 'On the contrary, I think he would be glad to go, for he told me that it mattered not to him in what part of the world he was cast. I think he would go anywhere, where he could establish an honorable name, and be free from the persecutions of his enemies.'

" 'Then I will write to a friend of mine who is in want of a confidential clerk to go to Calcutta, and if possible secure the place for Arendell, if you will excuse me for a few moments.'

" I took a cigar from the mantel-piece, lighted it, and strolled out to take a walk through the streets of the city.

I passed Mr. Arendell at the door of the hotel, and asked him to join me. He did so. I carefully avoided any allusion to the position in prospect for him, but assured him that I would aid him in every possible manner. He begged me to obtain news of his child, and to watch the movements of Jonas Davis.

“I conjure you not to let him escape my vengeance!” he exclaimed. “His fiendish soul shall be stretched upon the rack of suffering upon which he has laid mine! He has deprived me of my all. My good name, wife, and children; all! all! save my own honest nature, upon which my only hopes depend; that, thank God, he can not rob me of! I know, Mr. Ashton, that you will assist me to bring that man to justice. When you return to America, I beg of you in some way to aid me in the accomplishment of my just revenge, and to watch over my boy.”

“I promised him most sacredly to do both, and talked to him long and cheerfully, endeavoring to throw over the gloom of his darkened life some ray of hope. I was partially successful, for he returned to the hotel in better spirits than I had ever seen him, and repeated a part of our conversation to Mr. Holland, thus showing that it had made a favorable impression upon his mind.

“A few days afterward a letter was received from the gentleman to whom Mr. Holland had written, saying that he would take Mr. Arendell upon Mr. Holland’s recommendation, and offering a salary far beyond our most sanguine expectations. When he heard of the good fortune that had befallen him, he seemed perfectly overcome by it, and in most affecting terms thanked us both for this assurance of our confidence and esteem. Although I had done but little to serve him, he would not believe it, but with the most intense gratitude repeated again and again his sense of the obligations under which he was placed.

“Mr. Holland and his wife soon left for America. He was a fine young man, and seemed likely to enjoy an unclouded future. I parted with him with feelings of regret, but not doubting but that I should soon see him again, as he intended to interest himself in Arendell's case at the South, and to let me know all the results of his investigations.

“In a few weeks I had the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Arendell sail for Calcutta.

“‘Watch over my poor boy, and aid me in bringing my enemies to justice; and may God reward you for your kindness to a broken-hearted man,’ were his last words, as he clasped my hand at parting.

“‘I will! I will! Good-bye!’ I replied, as I sprang upon the dock and stood there watching him with strange interest, until the ship had moved far up the stream, and he had become invisible.

“Nearly six months passed before I returned to America. I had received one letter from Arendell, stating that he had safely arrived, was pleased with his situation, and prepared for whatever might befall him. He begged me to remember the promise I had given him, and I set foot upon my native shore fully intending to exert myself immediately in his behalf. I wrote to Mr. Holland, but for a long time received no answer. Then came one from his wife, giving the news of his death. He had died a few days before my letter arrived, and she was preparing to join her friends in Florida. Poor lady! she appeared in great distress. I was greatly shocked at the sudden death of this fine young man, and it interfered sadly with the plans I had made. I could obtain no tidings of the death of Arendell's wife or of the child, for my affairs required my presence at home, and I knew no one whom I could send on such an errand.

“At this time came my own domestic troubles, my wife died, leaving my little daughter to my sole care. She

was the image of her mother, and to me a priceless treasure. I bestowed on her all the love which hitherto had been divided between them. For some time every thing was forgotten in the anxiety I suffered on her account. A letter from Arendell at last aroused me to a remembrance of the promise I had made to him, and blaming myself greatly for the delay that had taken place, I set myself to work to remedy it. By a lucky accident I discovered that John Foley, a trustworthy man who had been from boyhood a servant in my father's family, was going to North Carolina, to look after some property which had been left him by a distant relation. I immediately conceived the idea of gaining through him the desired information. I sent for him, and on his arrival at my office, told him that I would pay his expenses to North Carolina and back, if he would bring me all the information he could glean concerning one William Arendell and his friends, enjoining upon him the necessity of acting with secrecy and dispatch.

"He delighted in mystery, and was not very scrupulous in regard to the manner of penetrating it. He readily promised to do all I wished, and he apparently did so, for in a few months I was in possession of many facts that were of great importance. Poor Arendell's wife was indeed dead, and the colonel held control over the property, but the slave child and Davis had both disappeared, not a trace of them could be discovered. The first doubtless had fled for freedom, the other from his creditors, who loudly lamented their credulity, which had been so ruthlessly betrayed by that most insinuating villain.

"Upon Foley's return to Boston I received full particulars from him, and here it seemed all my inquiries must end. Of course it was useless for me to endeavor to trace either of the fugitives, but I could not totally give the matter up, and blast Arendell's hopes of justice. I

watched diligently for the slightest clew to the whereabouts of either of the missing ones. Mr. Arendell seemed in despair when I communicated to him the loss of his son. He wrote entreating me not to desist from my search. My paternal feelings were aroused, and I renewed it with fresh energy. Everywhere that I thought the child could possibly have strayed, I placed people on the watch for him, but with no avail. My search for Davis was not more successful: for eight years I heard nothing of him.

“One winter day I left my home, and went to Evansville, to consult the well-known lawyer from whom the village took its name. I remained there all night, intending to go up to the house in the morning. A large party had gathered in the bar-room, and as I was fond of observing human nature, I took a seat by the glowing fire, instead of retiring to my own cheerless apartment, and was for some time much amused by the manners and conversation of the rustic crowd. A song had been demanded, and they were wrangling about who should sing it, when a heavy knock sounded upon the door, followed immediately by the entrance of a small, spare man who strode up to the fire without noticing any one.

““It is Jonas Nevins. What can bring him here?” said one, in a low voice.

“The name struck me as natural, but I could not for a moment remember where I had heard it. Meanwhile I regarded him attentively. The spare, wiry figure, the sharp face, the thin sandy hair, and above all the piercing cunning eyes, with their expression of dormant evil, reminded me strongly of the description Arendell had given of Jonas Nevins Davis, and I immediately came to the conclusion that, in the man before me, I saw the long-sought persecutor.

“When he had warmed himself sufficiently, he turned and looked at the company.

“What can bring you out to-night, Mr. Nevins?” asked one of the boldest.

“Business! business!” he replied, scowling. ‘I am not one to come to such a place to drink and gossip. When I leave home I do it for some purpose, you know that, I suppose?’

“His questioner turned back, somewhat abashed, and Davis again turned to the fire, warming his hands before it, by rubbing them softly and noiselessly together, as if he were preparing them and smoothing them for some delicate operation that required the utmost nicety of touch. Such you know was his custom in the most ordinary matters; a show of dexterity had in some way to be given to all he did. A gloom seemed to have fallen over the hitherto merry company. The silence was first broken by the unwelcome intruder, who, turning suddenly around, said:—

“I suppose you all know that my best farm-hand has left me? Can any of you recommend another?”

“‘Why, there’s Tom Stokes,’ said one, doubtfully. ‘Or Harry Carter,’ added another, in the same tone.

“‘I want no such lazy clowns about me!’ he exclaimed, impatiently. ‘A good man I must have. I can not do without one!’

“My mind was made up in a moment. ‘I think I could recommend a man that would suit you, sir,’ I said, politely.

“He regarded me for a moment with a searching look, and I suppose saw that I was a stranger and a gentleman. ‘I should be much obliged to you, sir, if you could,’ he returned, respectfully.

“‘I should like to speak to you in private,’ I said.

“‘Certainly! Here, landlord, show us into another room.’

“He did so, and we were soon alone.

“I recommended the servant I had in view, in the

highest terms. He offered good wages, and I promised to send the man down in a few days. I endeavored by many a cleverly put question to find out from whence he came, but he evaded all my inquiries with the most dexterous replies. However I was well satisfied that he was none other than the man I sought, and made no scruple in sending Foley, who was by this time an accomplished detective, to his house, to serve me as I wished, and before long, with full instructions, he was domesticated there.

"A year passed, and nothing occurred, when one day Foley came to my house, and asked to see me. Of course he was immediately admitted.

"He told me that on the day before, when going up to the garret, he heard an exclamation of surprise from Mrs. Nevins, and looking cautiously in—for he was always upon the look-out for such surprises—he saw her suddenly raise from the floor a small box, which she recognized, and which appeared to fill her with the greatest consternation and surprise. She wrested open the lid, and eagerly perused the letters, which it is almost needless to say, were afterward brought to me by the faithful Foley. Or at least, all save the one which you will find indorsed with the name of Evans. I will explain to you when we meet, why I did not at once endeavor to procure this letter from Mrs. Nevins, and the letter itself will explain how impossible it was for us to proceed against Nevins without the important testimony it contained.

"Of what occurred after these letters came into my possession, and while we waited for the most important, I need say nothing. You will conjecture that I was in constant communication with Mr. Arendell, and that my interest in Arthur and yourself, sprang from the fact of your near connection with his late wife, and his still existing enemy.

“I have heard you call me, my child, the most artless of men, what will you say when you know that in all my intercourse with you I have been the most designing. But I throw myself upon your mercy.

"CHARLES ASHTON."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IMPORTANT CORRESPONDENCE.

ALDEANE smiled as she read Mr. Ashton's appeal. There seemed something almost absurd in his offering any excuse for a dismemberment which had been caused by such worthy and totally disinterested motives. But without pausing long to think of this she turned to the package of letters, which she perceived were copies of the originals, and were neatly folded and numbered.

The first which she opened was quite short, and bore no date.

“MY DEAR N.:—

“You did well to leave here, as soon as your bird had flown, for the excitement throughout the country has been greater than ever. L. is nearly mad with rage at the escape. A. is seriously ill, as was of course to be expected. I shall write you again in a few days. Isn't New York a dangerous place to stay in? He is more likely to be waiting there than any place else.

“P. S. A. A. died yesterday.” “Yours, R.-B.

The second epistle was far more explicit, and was addressed to

“JONAS NEVINS, Esq.:—So you saw Arendell off for Europe yesterday. You were wise to let him go, for you have had your revenge, and L. is far more at ease with the width of the ocean between her and her husband's brother. I am surprised that you should waste so

much maudlin sentimentality over a woman's death, especially one whose heart you deliberately broke. There was some excuse for my shedding a few tears, for I had no grudge either against her or Arendell, and after all, L. has given me but half the money we have fooled out of her doting husband, which is hardly fair after all the risk I ran.

"For even after you had got the money from the safe, and given those few wrenches to the lock and window, you know you would never have gotten it into Arendell's house but for me. So you'll see, Nevins, that I don't consider myself half paid, and the only way for you to keep me from telling a tale that you wouldn't want to hear, is for you to refrain from bothering Lucinda for money, as I want for myself all that she can spare. What I should advise you to do would be to go somewhere and get lost, for I've wit enough to know that I can make myself safe at any time by turning State's evidence. After all, I simply put a sum of money in a man's safe, while you, on the contrary, abstracted one from the bank of which you were cashier. And by the way, your work was bunglingly done, for any expert would have seen at once, that a crow-bar had nothing to do with forcing back that lock, though I must say you defaced the door very perfectly, and I wonder how you did it so quietly.

"By the way, you asked me something about Arendell's child. No, it did not die, but on the contrary was one of the finest little girls I ever saw. Lu wanted it, but a sister of Mrs. A.'s interfered, and giving up all the property to the just [?] demands of the creditors, took off the child in a state of most virtuous and heroic indignation, saying it should never even bear the name of its vile father—so you may guess how he is looked upon here."

Aldeane paused and trembled violently—a suspicion of the truth at this moment dawned upon her. Could it be

that she—— She would not trust herself to conjecture more, but wildly read on:—

“The queerest thing of all is, that this sister has since disappeared from her home. She has sold out every thing and gone North. Of course no one but ourselves are particularly interested in her whereabouts, but as a friend, my dear Nevins, I should advise you to look out for Mrs. Guthrie, a widow with two children, the eldest really her own son, the second a girl which passes for her daughter.”

The letter slipped from Aldeane's grasp, and she fell to the floor unconscious. The surprise was too great for her to bear. How long this swoon continued she could never tell, but some one rapped at the door and summoned her to tea before she noticed that night had come, and it flashed upon her that she was the child of the unfortunate William Arendell, and of Alice his wife, whose tragical fate, so often hinted at, had but then been made fully known to her. And Mr. Ashton, and her father, how long had her identity been known to them? She turned eagerly to the back of the letter, and saw inscribed thereon the name of Evans. It was the letter her supposed mother had secreted; and trembling with emotion she concluded its perusal:—

“There is one point Lucinda is anxious upon, and that is that you should take some other name. Dropping the Davis is, in your case, not enough, for your other names, Jonas Nevins, are too well known here not to be recognized immediately by that woman if she has a particle of sense, which it is safe to suppose she has.

“I protest against any further demands for money. You know Lu gave you a round three thousand for simply abstracting a few hundreds from that old safe, and counterfeiting Arendell's writing in that stupid letter to Holland. That was really rich—just such a maudlin lot of nonsense as he would be expected to write about that

boy, whom, by the way, L—— holds with a tight rein now.

“Let me know by what name to address you next.

“Yours ever, R. BLAKE.”

The name of the overseer in full, no attempt at disguise, but rather a blazoning forth of his own identity, and that of the man and woman who had conspired to ruin William Arendell—her father—her father.

How she longed to fly to him, and throwing her arms around him promise him all a daughter's love and duty, as she sobbed upon his bosom all a true-hearted woman's pity. Then she thought with a faltering heart that he must have heard of her existence coolly, else he would have hurried to claim her as his child, and clasp her to his heart. But that thought she would not harbor for a moment. No, no, no! he was waiting to justify himself, to prove not only to her, but to the whole world his innocence before he would suffer her name to be mingled with his. It was all that was generous, all that was noble, and she firmly said she would await patiently his own time, even while she felt that to her the greatest joy on earth would be to be clasped in her father's embrace, to declare to him that she believed him innocent, even if the whole world was against him.

When she grew calmer she read the other letters, not one of which contained any reference to her as William Arendell's child. Though there were plentiful comments upon Davis's obstinacy in still retaining the name of Nevins, a great many humorous jests upon Mrs. Guthrie's dullness in not recognizing him, and much admiration of the boldness of Davis in making her his wife, and various allusions to money matters, in which it was shown that Lucinda Arendell to the day of her death had been forced to propitiate with large sums her insatiable coadjutor in revenge. There was, also, some mention made of the

flight of Junius, though that was evidently considered a matter of secondary importance. The last letter alone particularly interested Aldeane. It contained full particulars of the death of Mrs. Arendell, and warned Nevins of the utter uselessness of applying to the writer for further remittances, or of threatening Colonel Arendell, who had been prepared by his wife's confession to declare his brother's innocence, and challenge a second investigation of the matter, which might prove troublesome to Nevins, however securely he might fancy himself hidden.

"And now," concluded the letter, "we are excellent friends, and as friends let us part. It is far safest for both of us that we now die to each other. We have mutual interests in preserving this secret, but can have none for tormenting ourselves with the discussion of it. So far our little venture has paid us well, and there is no occasion for us to encroach upon each other. All you have to do is to keep your wife as well blinded as she is now, and I will take care to keep the conscience and guard the tongue of John Arendell. There can be no reason for your answering this, so here we part.

"Wishing you success, I remain yours, R. B."

But one paper now remained to be read, that was indorsed with the name of Evans, and as Aldeane opened it she recognized the handwriting of her whom she had loved and mourned as a mother. It was the document which Arthur had so long believed in existence, and had so anxiously sought. It was a full confession of the plot which had been planned against William Arendell by his brother's wife, Lucinda Arendell, and the cashier of the bank, Jonas Nevins Davis, and of its execution by them, assisted by Richard Blake. This confession was signed by Jonas Nevins Davis, *alias* Jonas Nevins, and witnessed by John Foley and Ann Conway.

Beneath these words were written:

"I have signed the above confession, which I swear to be true in every particular, in earnest of the sincerity with which I bind myself—in consideration of my wife's clemency, in withholding from the public the secret she has gained—to educate, at my sole cost, Arthur Guthrie, the son of the late Arthur Guthrie, of —, North Carolina, and Ellen his wife, and also the child known as theirs, but who is in truth Aldeane Arendell, the daughter of William Arendell, of —, North Carolina, and Alice his wife.

"JONAS NEVINS DAVIS."

This then was the bond of which Mrs. Nevins had faintly made mention upon her death-bed. The bond and confession which she had wrested from him in his mortal terror, and which had more than once thereafter placed her very life in jeopardy. It seemed to Aldeane that nothing more complete than the evidence before her could be needed. One of the witnesses to this bond she knew was alive, and these letters of Blake's were they not overwhelming proofs of the guilt of himself and his wretched confidant. She could not imagine why Mr. Ashton had said they should need her aid. What could she do, that had not already been done? For hours she paced her room nearly wild with excitement and when the darkness and stillness of night had settled upon the place, feeling choked and stifled with the closeness of her room she stole down into the gardens, and wandered up and down, thinking, thinking, thinking, till it seemed as if her heart and brain would burst.

Had Arthur known this long? Would he love her still as his sister? Had Blake escaped? These were the totally dissimilar questions that pursued her, until at last she resolved to silence the last at least, and hurrying to Aunt Roxy's cabin called her out and boldly asked if aught had been heard of him.

"Why laws, yes!" cried Aunt Roxy, starting back in amazement. Dey done "rested him dis bressed mornin'. Massa William's come back, and Mass Richard he robbed de bank, and dat oder fellah dat hated Mass William so. An' bress ye, jest come in, Miss Aldeane, an' Samiry'll tell ye all about it; an' de Lord knows I al'ays said Mass William neber took dat money, an' I reckon though Mass John swore he'd sell us all if we breaved a word to ye, I guess ole Roxy'll tell you now!"

And so Aldeane, half fainting, was thrust into a chair to hear once more the tale of her father's shame, and her mother's broken heart, and though more than once she seemed swooning away, and found relief only in violent weeping, she kept inviolate the secret of her birth, and left the cabin at length with persuasions of her father's innocence so infinitely strengthened that no power of earth or heaven would for an instant have had power to cast a doubt upon it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALDEANE'S MISSION AND ITS RESULTS.

"AND what?" said Aldeane, upon the next morning, when Mr. Ashton greeted her—"What aid can I give in proving my father's innocence? Are not these letters conclusive?"

"No," said Mr. Ashton, gravely, "for Blake's are written in an assumed hand; there are no persons but Arthur and yourself—interested witnesses the defendants will declare—to prove that the others are in the handwriting of Mrs. Nevins—or Davis, I should say."

"But does Blake deny that he wrote those letters?" demanded Aldeane, breathlessly.

"He denies any complicity in the robbery, which is equivalent to that," answered Mr. Ashton. "And the handwriting of these letters is so different from his own, that unless he is induced to make a confession, our case will be an exceedingly difficult one to maintain."

Aldeane remained for some time in deep thought, and then she briefly related the ex-overseer's persecution of herself, and cited the mysterious threats and promises which he had often used. "And now," she concluded, "I think I understand what you wish me to do. You wish me to induce Mr. Blake to become State's evidence."

"Exactly," replied Mr. Ashton. "Not but what we are certain of success without it. But your father has the greatest objection to bringing his brother upon the stand, and forcing his late wife's confession from his lips."

"Ah, how generous!" cried Aldeane. "Oh, Mr.

Ashton, how I long to see my father. Why will he not allow me to hasten to him?"

And then Mr. Ashton told her of the wild joy of Mr. Arendell, when he found that his child still lived, but after his first passionate delight was passed, when he found himself in the same country, in the same State, he felt that he could not see her until he had cleared away the reproach that rested upon him, until she could embrace him without a doubt.

"I could do that now!" cried Aldeane, with tears. "Indeed, indeed, I could! Oh, Mr. Ashton, I feel so lost. My darling brother, mine no longer, my newly-declared father——"

She paused, and then with a scream ran forward, and was clasped in Arthur's arms.

"What, you cold-hearted girl!" he exclaimed, embracing her warmly. "Have you already discarded me?"

But she could only sob, and call him her dear brother, her dear, dear brother, and when she grew calmer he told her, what Mr. Nevins had said of her years before, upon the day his mother was buried.

"And of course, although I suspected whose child you were, I dared not mention it," interrupted Mr. Ashton, wiping his eyes and coughing vehemently. "You see your mother had the only letter that referred to the matter, and I dared not raise hopes that I couldn't confirm."

And then Arthur told her how Charles Evans had found the long-lost documents, and handed them to him as a wedding gift, and how copies of them had been forwarded to Mr. Arendell, at Calcutta, and how they had not reached him until weeks after they should have done so, and how he (Arthur) had thought he never would come, and enable him to defy the enemy that was secretly ruining him, and finally the consternation and surprise of Nevins upon his arrest, and the necessity that existed

for Blake's confession, in order that the exposure of certain family matters should be avoided.

And then very quietly, without saying a word, Aldeane went up-stairs, and put on her bonnet and shawl, and when she reappeared, Arthur without a word conducted her to a carriage which was waiting at the door, and accompanied by Mr. Ashton they proceeded rapidly toward Loring.

She spoke but once upon the way, and that was just before the carriage stopped before the prison door. "I am at liberty, I suppose," she said then, "to promise Mr. Blake that if he makes a free confession, no proceedings will be taken against him; that Mr. Nevins alone will be tried for this offense?"

"Certainly," answered Mr. Ashton and Arthur, simultaneously; and drawing her veil closely over her face, Aldeane followed them into the prison, and ten minutes later found herself alone with Richard Blake.

Need I say how long and difficult her task proved, how determined he was, that if there was a disclosure of the real perpetrators of the crime, there should be disclosures also of all that preceded and followed that crime. She remained with him hours, alternately pleading with and threatening him, and at last was triumphant. She did what all Mr. Arendell's lawyers, what Mr. Arendell himself had failed to do, she wrested from Richard Blake a full confession of the genuineness of the letters, and the minutest particulars of the plot which had driven William Arendell to a wretched exile, and his young wife to an early grave.

A week later, the most famous trial for perjury that had ever taken place in the State, came off. The evidence was perfect, though he who knew more than any—Colonel Arendell—was not once called upon the stand, and William Arendell went forth from the court-house cleared of the stain which had rested upon him for more than

twenty years. Richard Blake followed him, bowed down with shame, and Jonas Nevins Davis remained in impotent fury in the self-same jail to which he had once consigned his innocent rival.

The excitement that ensued upon the conclusion of the trial was almost frightful. A thousand friendly hands were thrust toward William Arendell, and as many voices called his name, as, overpowered by emotion, he sank upon a seat, and whispered his brother's name for Colonel Arendell was there—there on his knees before the brother he had wronged—not, as he cried with tears, at the first, not at the first, but in concealing his innocence when his dying wife had declared it to him.

"My God, rise! Do you not see all these people?" cried William Arendell, drawing back.

"I see them all!" replied Colonel Arendell. "Before them all, I pray you to forgive me."

Mr. Arendell looked anxiously into the upturned face. "My child! my child!" he said, brokenly. "Have you been just to her?"

"Ah, brother, I fear not just! not just! Yet, for years she has been dear to me as my own daughter," was the reply.

"Let old differences be forgotten, then, as they are forgiven," said Mr. Arendell, and the hands of the two brothers met in the warm clasp of reconciliation.

"William Arendell! William Arendell!" sounded on all sides, and a hundred friendly hands were extended toward him.

He was soon replying to the congratulations and inquiries of numerous citizens, and it was long ere he found himself outside the court-house door. A carriage was standing there. Colonel Arendell opened the door, and invited his brother to enter.

He extended the invitation to Mr. Ashton, Arthur, and Mr. Evans; but those gentlemen, knowing that the brothers

would prefer to be alone, declined, promising, however, to meet them at dinner. As they moved away, they became aware that the horses had been removed, and that strong and willing hands were drawing the carriage onward, while enthusiastic hurrahs for William Arendell rent the air.

"To Grassmere!" shouted a voice.

"Where is my child?" cried William Arendell.

And with still wilder cheers, the excited throng turned down the road that led to Arendell House.

And at that moment Aldeane paced her own room, half wild with excitement, for Charles Evans, who had acted as Mr. Arendell's counsel, had already brought the news of her father's triumph, and he would be there presently, and she would be clasped in his arms, he would call her his daughter. She trembled and grew faint with emotion, and then she heard wild shouts in the distance and, knowing what they portended, rushed eagerly to the window, and, as she saw the tumultuous crowd advancing, shrank back and covered her face with her hands. Afterward, although she had not power to look or move, she knew the carriage had stopped before the door, and she heard, above the din without, one strange voice within the house, calling for his daughter, she heard a footstep at her door, and rushed forward, and was clasped in her father's arms.

At first, she could neither see nor hear any thing, and then she beheld a dark-bearded face, which was strangely familiar, bending over her, and a strong man clasping her to his breast, and sobbing: "My daughter, my Alice! speak to me, darling!"

"Father," she murmured, "love me! Oh, love me, if but for my mother's sake;" and then she burst into a passion of tears, and clung to him convulsively.

Need we say how the next hour was passed, and how at the end of that time her father led her to the rooms be-

low, and they received together the congratulations of their assembled friends. Mrs. Arendell could, indeed, say but little, for she seemed dazed by the revelations of the past hour; and when Aldeane grew calmer, she saw that all the other faces were white, as if with some suppressed emotion; and suddenly the truth burst upon her, and she cried, "Something has happened to that miserable man. What is it? Oh, tell me what?"

Her father grew deadly pale, as he echoed the question, and Arthur, hesitatingly, replied: "I meant not to have told you, Aldeane; it will be a shock to your gentle heart."

"He has killed himself," she murmured faintly.

"Yes."

"My God!" cried Mr. Arendell, "is it possible they have been so careless, that they left him for a moment alone? How did he effect the deed?"

Arthur drew Mr. Arendell aside, that Aldeane might not hear the shocking particulars, and then briefly related them. The prisoner, with a small penknife, which he had managed to conceal about his person, had cut the veins of his wrists, and had bled to death in a few minutes—was perfectly dead when discovered.

And so the deep-dyed villain was gone—gone in this horrible manner, without hope, without repentance, to meet an avenging God. William Arendell shuddered as he listened. It was horrible, horrible, and threw deep gloom upon his joy, and Aldeane, the one he had wronged as deeply, as he had even William Arendell, wept wildly over his dreadful fate, and long refused to be comforted.

But calmer thoughts came with the evening, the blessed evening which she spent at her father's side, in the midst of the reunited family.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A TARDY EXPLANATION.

BUT, with a heart filled with conflicting emotions, and her brain perplexed in vain endeavors to realize fully her new position, Aldeane could not feel perfectly at ease in any society, especially that of her newly-found father; but not until a late hour was she suffered to leave them. When she arose to retire, Mr. Evans placed in her hands a small package, saying:—

“Miss Arendell, here is the last message of your more than mother to her adopted daughter. I can not say that I am sorry that it has for so long remained hidden in my custody, as it would doubtless have filled your heart with anguish to have read of your father’s dreary exile, while, since he has returned to you, you can contemplate it with less sorrow, and with none of the dire forebodings and wild conjectures that would then have tortured you. God grant,” he added, in a lower tone, “that all your days may be happy as this—but mine——” he looked at her wistfully a moment, then turned sorrowfully away.

With her gentle eyes suffused with tears Aldeane left him, and ascended to her own apartment. The bright moonlight was streaming through the lightly curtained windows, flooding it with a calm pearly light, that touched all things as if with the hand of enchantment, throwing over all a magic beauty. The solemn whip-poor-will monotonously repeated its mournful cry, and the river’s night-loving myriads croaked shrilly, answering each other from bank to bank. She went to the window, and

for a time contemplated the rare scene of beauty before her. The moon had risen high in the heavens, far above the surrounding forests of tall pines, leaving them darkly defined against the clear expanse of sky. A fairy land of sloping fields and groves and white-walled cottages seemed bounded by the dark impenetrable frame-work. A delicious reverie was binding its silken chains around her, but, remembering her mother's unread epistle, she turned with a sigh from the enchanting scene before her, and lighting her lamp, broke the seal and saw traced in her mother's well-known characters the name "Aldeane Guthrie Arendell."

Tears filled her eyes at the sight of the familiar writing, and blurred the sheet she had opened. She read it all. The story of her father's exile, her mother's death, and of the ill-fated marriage of her adopted parent with Jonas Nevins, whom, too late, she discovered to be the vile and treacherous Davis, who had ruined Arendell and broken the heart of his wife. The letter closed with an earnest appeal to Aldeane, to return to Colonel Arendell, and, if possible, to obtain from him at least a part of her unjustly-kept property.

She could but reflect how signally Providence had led her on, placing her in the path that she might have sought through life in vain. With a deep sense of her own weakness, she made her orisons to God, and lay down not to sleep, but to wander in the labyrinthian land of reverie till morning, then she fell asleep, and the sun was shining brightly when she awoke. The voices of the gentlemen upon the piazza, was the first sound that greeted her, as, hastily arising, she made her simple toilet. She stood before the glass, smoothing back her dark, lustrous hair, when the door was softly opened, and Jessie's bright face peeped in.

"Dear Miss Aldeane!" she exclaimed, coming in at her invitation, "I am so glad you are up!"

Aldeane sat down, drawing the beautiful child nearer to her, Jessie laid a fragrant store of blossoms in her lap, then for a moment regarding her, doubtfully said :—

“Miss Aldeane, ma told me that you are my cousin. Is it true? Ma never does tell stories, but it is so strange!”

“It is perfectly true, my dear Jessie!” replied Aldeane, embracing her.

“I never even knew I had an Uncle William until last night; and are you his daughter for sure?” she returned, still slightly incredulous.

Aldeane laughed. “Are you then really so unwilling to own me as a relative, Jessie?”

“Oh! dear Miss Aldeane, you know I’m not, I love you better than any one else in the world!” cried the child, impulsively.

“Ah!” she continued, sighing as she glanced at their mourning garments, “how delighted sister Leonore would have been!”

“She is happier in heaven, dear Jessie, than she could ever have been on earth!” replied Aldeane, her eyes filling with tears.

“Here is some swamp dogwood,” said Jessie, “I brought to you, Miss Aldeane, because she used to love it so well, she used to say that the fairies had taken acorn-cups and colored them crimson and filled them with corals for ornaments for the water-spirits, and that we ought not to rob them by stringing them like beads to wear on our necks. I planted a rose-bush on her grave, that I split off the very one that this came from,” she went on sadly, singling out a white rose-bud from the flowers that lay in Aldeane’s lap, “and it is growing finely. I put a crimson one on Mr. Raymond’s grave, and that is growing, too. I hope that they will get so large that they will mingle together, for you know *they* loved each other so.”

She spoke with childlike earnestness, gazing pensively

upon the flowers. "Ma told me to ask you," she said at length, "to love me and her as you have always done, and not to hate poor papa, but to love him for all our sakes, chiefly that of his dead daughter. What did she mean, Miss Allie. She made me repeat the words over ever so many times? What has papa done? Please love him any way; he is always so very sorrowful now."

Even had she wished to, Aldeane could not have resisted the innocent pleader.

"Sweet little Jessie, I love you all!" she exclaimed. "Tell mamma, she need not fear that I shall hate your papa. I love him very much!"

"I bless you for the words!" said Mrs. Arendell, entering the room. "Pardon me, my love, for using so little ceremony!"

Aldeane observed that her face was pale, and bore traces of tears.

"Dear aunt," she said, kissing her affectionately, and leading her to a chair, "did you think I could ever forget you? Indeed, the return of my father has but strengthened my love for you! nothing can ever lessen it!"

"But, my dear, it is so shameful! so very shameful!" murmured Mrs. Arendell, burying her face, like a grieving child, in Aldeane's dress, and bursting into tears.

Jessie looked on wonderingly; Aldeane motioned her from the room, and applied herself to the task of composing the agitated lady.

"Dear aunt, I do not blame Uncle John so very much," she said. "I believe he was blindly influenced by evil counselors. You know we are to have an interview to talk it all over, after breakfast. No doubt we shall discover that he is innocent of at least a part laid to his charge. I am confident he would not willingly defraud his brother's child."

"But he has withheld your property for so long, and

kept you as a governess in his family, when he has known, ever since you have been with us, that you were his niece. He recognized you immediately; he told me so last night. Yet, although he earnestly desired to give you your property, he had not sufficient moral courage to suffer momentary inconvenience himself, by withdrawing it from his speculations, many of which, no doubt, have turned out to be worthless. Dear child, I had not the faintest idea that you were connected with the family, or you should not have been so wronged."

"Let us say no more about it now," returned Aldeane, "probably we both misunderstand the matter." She was exceedingly surprised at the discovery that Colonel Arendell had recognized, and failed to own her as his niece. She turned away, that Mrs. Arendell might not read the thoughts that filled her heart, and which were legibly stamped upon her expressive face.

The breakfast bell rang; Mrs. Arendell rose hastily, saying, entreatingly, "Dear Aldeane, think and speak of him kindly. He would not have acted so if I had been his wife in those days of sorrow and temptation."

"I know it; I know it!" replied Aldeane, "there! hurry away now! Aunt Roxy, I expect, is already in agony, lest her first installment of waffles will cool before they reach the lips of 'Mass'r William and his friends.'"

They descended to the dining-room together. Colonel Arendell was nervous and *distracted*, William Arendell almost jovial, and his friends entirely so. Eddie wished "Cousin Aldeane" good morning, with every demonstration of satisfaction, and informed her that he was going that day with Uncle Adam to fetch Frank home to participate in the general rejoicing.

Soon after breakfast, Mr. Ashton, Mr. Evans, and Arthur went to Loring, and Mr. Arendell, the colonel, and Aldeane to the library.

She seated herself at the window and the two gentle-

men near the center-table. Silence for some time prevailed. Aldeane toyed with the tassels of the window-curtain, Colonel Arendell busied himself in arranging numerous papers, whose rattle alone broke the stillness, and Mr. Arendell looked on, patiently waiting for his brother to open the conversation. He seemed little inclined to do so, but after the papers were arranged to his satisfaction, commenced piling up the books that were scattered around. Aldeane watched his nervous movements for some time with quiet amusement; her father, she observed, did the same, but at last he remarked:—

“John, we came here to talk our business affairs over. If you have quite finished arranging those books, we will begin, if you please.”

“Certainly,” replied the colonel, sitting down, “I was only waiting for you to begin.”

“And I for you!” returned Mr. Arendell, laughing; “but now to business.”

The gentlemen were soon deeply engaged in an animated discussion; carried on, however, in so low a tone that Aldeane heard but little of it. Half hidden in the drape of the window, she was following the train of her own thoughts, and ere long became perfectly oblivious of the presence of her father and uncle. She was suddenly aroused by an exclamation from the latter.

“William, I must explain this matter to Aldeane! doubtless she also thinks me a villain. I can not suffer that impression to remain, for I was deluded and forced into all my errors. Lucinda and Blake played a bold game, only too successfully!”

Aldeane emerged from the window recess, approached the table, and said: “Uncle John, please tell me all about it. I am anxious to hear all the explanations you have to offer. I am sure there were some extenuating circumstances.”

Colonel Arendell looked at her gratefully. Her father

handed her a chair; then resuming his seat, motioned to his brother to proceed; and, after a moment's reflection, he began:—

“Aldeane, to you I address myself, seeking to clear your mind from the suspicions which I know are resting there concerning me. You have already heard, that before your father's marriage he became deeply indebted to me. This was chiefly accomplished through the influence of my wife, Lucinda. Whenever William applied to me for money, she would advise me to lend it, and, indeed, insist upon my doing so, but always on the condition that he gave me good security. Thus, in time, nearly his whole plantation became mortgaged to me. After he married he became more frugal, and no more applied to me for loans. Every one except Lucinda loved his young wife. She also pretended to William and the public that she did so, but in private I have heard her inveigh against her in the bitterest terms. She called Alice weak and childish, and reiterated again and again her displeasure that William had thrown himself away upon such a mere nonentity. I never could discover the reason of her animosity, which daily seemed to increase, until she hated, with all the strength of her nature, the inoffensive and lovely young wife.

“The day before William was arrested, she reminded me of his indebtedness to me. It had never troubled me before, for I never looked into my own affairs, except to examine the books about once a year. Blake managed every thing; paid out money, and received payments. I had never heard him speak of receiving any funds from William, and when my wife called the matter to my mind, and also that he had lately made large sums by speculation, I felt much annoyed, and acceded to my wife's desire that I would go to Grassmere the following morning and demand payment.

“Accordingly, at an early hour I ordered my horse to

ride away. I saw Blake standing near the cotton-gin as I passed. I stopped to speak to him.

“‘You are going to Grassmere, I suppose?’ he said.

“I did not think this a strange question, nor stop to wonder how he should guess so accurately, when I went to other places a dozen times oftener than there once. Of course, I had started too early, and he was stationed there to detain me; but quite unsuspecting his motives, I answered, ‘Yes.’

“He looked at his watch. ‘It is still early,’ he said. ‘I should be very much obliged if you would come in and look at the cotton that was packed by that new machine last fall. You have not seen it. I should like your opinion as to whether we shall employ the same process this year.’

“I was surprised at this request, for he seldom consulted me on any matter. Nearly all the cotton had been sent away, and I thought if he wished to hear my opinion he should have asked for it before. However I said nothing of that, but replied: ‘Some other time I will look to it, I am in a hurry now.’

“He looked disappointed. ‘As like as not I shall not be able to see you again until all the cotton is sent off,’ he answered.

“I was, in reality, in no great haste, so I dismounted and entered the gin. Blake detained me on various pretexts for over an hour. As I was about to mount my horse, I said:

“‘I suppose that William has not made you any payments on those debts, Blake?’

“He did not answer immediately, and I repeated my question, turning to look at him. He was very pale, and seemed struggling for breath.

“‘What is the matter?’ I exclaimed. ‘You were at Croyden’s last night, and staid too late I suspect. Dissipation does not agree with you!’

"That is true," he replied. And I rode off without awaiting an answer to my question.

"On my arrival at Grassmere I found every thing in the greatest confusion. William under arrest, his wife insensible, and the servants half-crazed with fright.

"During my ride thither, I had been pondering on the matter, and could not but think it strange that William had not hastened to discharge his liabilities the moment he was in a position to do so. My wife's subtle warnings and insinuations still rang in my ears, and by the time I reached Grassmere my annoyance had deepened into a passion which became frenzy when I discovered the state of affairs which existed there.

"I need not speak of what followed. You know it all. Suffice it to say, that during the interview that I had with William, mutual recriminations took the place of sober inquiry, and I failed to discover that he had paid the greater part of what I fancied he was indebted to me. I left him in anger, never for a moment supposing but that he was guilty of the crime of which he was accused, for indeed appearances were entirely against him.

"You know how he was tried and found guilty. Many, many times my anger was dying away in pity for him, when it would be revived by some new insinuation from Lucinda or Richard Blake.

"The day had arrived when the first part of the sentence was to be performed. I stayed at home, almost believing that I heard the sound of the lash that was to brand my own brother forever with infamy, and with a stain that would taint the entire family. Blake had gone to Loring. My wife seemed in a most amiable mood, and spoke of urging Alice to make her home with us, although William had decidedly opposed it. I was surprised, and asked her what had induced her to change her opinion concerning Alice.

"She replied: 'Her condition demands our sympathy,

and her conduct during the trial shows her to be worthy of it.'

"Just as she completed this answer, Blake rushed breathlessly into the room, exclaiming:—

"He has escaped! he has escaped!"

"I was delighted. As pale as death my wife rose from her seat.

"Escaped! did you say?" she demanded hoarsely. 'Where is the sheriff? Why are they not pursuing him? My God! do they intend that he shall go free?'

"They are preparing to follow him now,' answered Blake, while I regarded her with the most intense astonishment. I had supposed that she would rejoice with me over his escape. I now saw her beside herself with disappointed revenge and hate. I reproved her, angrily.

"She replied in the most bitter terms, declaring that she cared nothing for me; that she had married me merely for convenience; that she had loved William until he rejected all her overtures. Then her affection turned to hatred, which burned more fiercely than her love had ever done. That she had sworn to be avenged, and had for years been plotting his ruin.

"I was astounded, and demanded whether she had had any thing to do with the robbery for which he was condemned.

"Blake laid his hand on her arm, and said, soothingly: 'Pray compose yourself, Lucinda.'

"His words seemed to recall her to her senses, and to the importance of the question I had propounded, and she answered steadily:—

"No, I knew nothing of it until he was arrested."

"I believed her words. I could not think my wife, whom I had blindly loved, to be so utterly depraved as she really was, but from that moment I lost all affection for her. I blushed for my name when I reflected that she bore it, more deeply than I did when I believed that

William had disgraced it. Without another word I left her, still foaming with rage, and went to Loring. There I found the sheriff and constables endeavoring to form a company to go in search of the fugitive. They could get but few volunteers, as William had always been a favorite. I called the sheriff aside, and found him not sufficiently firm, to resist my solicitations and a handsome bribe to let him escape. He led a few men into the neighboring woods, but they returned at night without the prisoner, and the search was never renewed.

"I believe every one except Lucinda rejoiced at his escape. A few days afterward, Aldeane, you were born, and a few hours later your mother died. Mrs. Guthrie was there, and declared her intention of adopting the little orphan. To this Lucinda decidedly objected, but I favored the plan, as I knew William's child would receive but indifferent if not positively cruel usage if it fell into her hands. I was constituted administrator of the property, and when I had paid the few outstanding debts, and those which I supposed were due to myself, there was but a very small portion remaining to the child. This I proposed should be given to Mrs. Guthrie's care for the use of the infant, but she replied indignantly that the child of Alice Deane should never touch one cent of the money or even bear the name of Arendell. She repeatedly declared that Alice had told her that William had paid nearly all his debts. Blake swore to the contrary, and as no receipts could be produced, I of course believed him. Mrs. Guthrie took the child and departed in anger, leaving her little property with me. I portioned off what I supposed belonged to her, hoping that she would at some time return and claim it.

"No unity of feeling after those events ever existed between my wife and me. I well knew that she had never even respected me, while captivated by her beauty I had adored her. I feared that ere long I should hate

her. This feeling was increased by her treatment of Junius. I at one time sent him to Grassmere, but she had him brought back the next day. I had made up my mind to brave her anger, and send him North, when to my joy he ran away. I could not prevent his being advertised, for Blake and Lucinda went to R—— on purpose to do it, but I could and did prevent any search being made for him.

“A few months after the escape of Junius, Leonore was born. I so much feared that the child would resemble her mother that I could scarcely look upon her, but when Lucinda died leaving the innocent little creature entirely to my care, I found her all my fondest desires could paint. I took her to my heart, and she became indeed, a part of my life, that life that went from me when I saw her laid in her early grave!”

Colonel Arendell paused for a moment, overcome by emotion. Aldeane's tears fell fast, and her father thought of his slave-born child whose revenge had been so terrible: coming as it did, even after his own death, drawing its victim down to the grave at his side.

Colonel Arendell strove again to speak, but memories of Leonore filled his heart, and prevented utterance. After waiting a few moments, Mr. Arendell took his brother's hand and said:—

“John, I sincerely pity you. I remember my own agony, when I lost my good name, my wife, children, and wealth, and can well conceive what your feelings must have been when your daughter died. This subject is very painful to you. Let us speak no more of it. Try now to tell me how you discovered the plot, in which you had been unconsciously made a prominent actor.”

It was some time before Colonel Arendell regained his self-control, but he said at last:—

“I must again go back to the period of Lucinda's death, an event of which I can never speak without a

shudder. For some time she had been in ill health, and in the early part of the winter she took a violent cold, which settled upon her lungs, producing hemorrhage of a most alarming character. It was arrested, but it was plain that it might return again and produce instant death. No one dared to tell her of it, and for weeks she lingered on, deluding herself by false hopes of recovery. Gradually, but surely, the knowledge of her danger entered her mind. She endeavored to steel her heart against it, but in spite of her indomitable will she felt that it was true, and acknowledged to herself that her death was at hand.

"Had she not learned it gradually, the shock might have killed her. As it was it threw her into the most horrible paroxysms of despair.

"*"I will not; can not die!"* she would exclaim, and then for hours remain in gloomy silence, then in a shrill voice, almost a shriek, she would repeat, *"I can not, will not die!"*

"But she could not wrestle with her destiny. She was dying. In the awfulness of despair she felt it. In my feebleness I tried to point her to God, but a belief in one, which had never dwelt in her heart, could not at that late moment be planted there. Still unbelieving she went down into the darkness of that tomb, which she fancied would hide her forever from life or judgment.

"The night before she died I was alone with her, endeavoring to throw some light upon her dark soul, for to see her die without any belief in God, or heaven, was to me the most intolerable agony.

"*"There is a day of judgment,"* I said at last, *"when, with all that have ever lived, we shall stand before the throne of God to hear our doom!"*

"*"I do not; I will not believe it!"* she cried, covering her eyes with her wasted hands, as if to shut out some

horrible spectacle. 'Shall I see William there, crying for vengeance? and Alice in her shroud to upbraid me? No! no! when our bodies are laid in the grave, they will crumble to dust! No spirit will ever reanimate them!'

"Her words confirmed my previous suspicions. 'You had, then, something to do with William's ruin?' I cried, 'You wronged him foully.' I took hold of her arm in my earnestness. 'Tell me what you have done—you are a dying woman—tell me before you die, how far you sinned, and how far he was guilty!'

"For even then I had no idea but that William had committed the crime, and supposed that some deep plot had been laid to tempt him to do it.

"'What do you mean?' she inquired, looking at me with the savage glare of a tiger at bay. 'Do you believe that I ruined him?'

"'Yes, I do.' I replied firmly. 'You will soon be out of the reach of human laws and human judgment. Tell me, I entreat, I command you, all that you know of this horrible affair.'

"She looked at me fiercely a moment, then sank back upon the pillows, and remained with her eyes closed as if striving with thoughts of the most bitter description. At last she asked me to lift her higher upon the pillows, and to give her a little wine. I did so, and she told me all. Yes, to my horror and mortification, not only that William was perfectly innocent of the crime, of which he was believed guilty, but also that he had paid into Blake's hands nearly the whole of what he had been indebted to me, and that the property of which I had taken possession as my right, in reality belonged to my brother's child, who had been thus defrauded of her fortune. Davis and she had concocted the plot, and Blake, who well knew every nook and corner of Grassmere, had been hired to place the money in a secret

place, and to keep silence concerning the payments that had been made to him.

"She gave me all, except what she had given to Blake, of the sums which William had from time to time paid in, but during the whole interview she expressed not one word of repentance. Her approaching death seemed to fill her mind with terror, unaccompanied by any other feeling, and as she went down to the grave, her last words, breathed out with a despairing shriek, were :—

"‘It is all dark ! There is darkness here forever !’"

Aldeane's face was blanched with horror. Colonel Arendell seemed overpowered by those painful recollections. He arose and walked slowly up and down the room, but returning at last to his seat near the table, continued :—

"I have said much that is here unnecessary. I have not spoken of this subject before for years, and it is hard to deny myself utterance now, but I will pass on to the question you asked me some time since. ‘How I recognized Aldeane.’ For some time after my wife's death, my one engrossing thought was to find William's child and to restore her property. I wrote immediately to Mrs. Guthrie, but after waiting some weeks, and receiving no response, I determined to endeavor to obtain an interview. I accordingly went to — County, and to my sorrow and surprise, learned that she had gone to the North, had married there, and for a long time had not been heard from. I could only hear that she had gone with the intention of settling in the State of New York, and that it was probable she had avoided all intercourse with her family, in order that she might bring up her adopted child so entirely separated from her friends, that not even the slightest hint which might lead her to suppose she was not her own daughter, might reach her.

"This I took to be a reasonable view of the case. I

caused the missing ones to be advertised throughout the North, but without any result; and at last I determined to go myself in search of them. I went, but not a trace of them could I find. Happily, however, I became acquainted with my present wife, and when I returned, she was with me to gladden my home.

"After some years, we needed a governess for our children. One was advertised for, and Aldeane came, something in her voice and face seemed natural to me, but I had not at first the slightest idea that she was my brother's child. I discovered it on our return from church the first Sunday she was with us. My first impulse was to own her as my niece and restore her property immediately, but a moment's consideration deterred me. I had been speculating largely; much of the property was invested in sugar plantations in Louisiana, and I could not withdraw it without seriously embarrassing myself. I discovered that she was perfectly ignorant of her true position in life; I determined, unless in the event of my death, not to make her acquainted with it for a few years at least, I argued, that as I should take care of her, and satisfy every want, the withholding of her property for a time, would do her no harm, and be of the greatest benefit to me; besides, my wife knew nothing of what had taken place, and I was anxious that she should not until I could make restoration without injury or inconvenience to myself, and consequently to her."

William Arendell's brow darkened.

"There is your error," he said. "It darkens all your previous actions. The fact that you did not immediately own my daughter when you recognized her, would lead one to suppose that your motives in the past were not altogether pure!"

Colonel Arendell quailed beneath the implied distrust.

"Oh, father, uncle is excusable," cried Aldeane. "He could not have given up my property immediately with-

out disclosing every thing, his wife's perfidy and all, to the eyes of the world, and that, I am sure, would have been a terrible trial!"

"He was wrong," replied Mr. Arendell, decidedly, "he might at least have recognized you as his niece, and privately and gradually restored your property. But to keep you in his house as a hireling, when half the money he used was yours, was a most shameful proceeding! Such conduct can not be explained away!" He spoke warmly, bringing his hand heavily down upon the table.

Aldeane felt that his words were true, yet, with all his faults she loved her uncle, and wished above all things that her father might become perfectly reconciled to him. She remained silent, not wishing by word or deed to widen the breach between them.

Colonel Arendell spoke first. "I know this matter can not be explained away," he said, humbly. "Through all my life I have lacked force of character, or moral courage. I did not know Aldeane then, as I do now, or I believe I should have summoned resolution enough to have told her all; afterward many things deterred me from doing so."

William Arendell did not answer, but looked angrily and gloomily at his brother.

Aldeane said, soothingly: "Let us say no more about it. I have been treated as a relative if never acknowledged as such. I never felt myself to be a hireling in this house!"

"Perhaps not," replied her father, "but you was considered such by strangers. John, how would you have felt if your daughter had suffered such humiliation?"

"Do not speak of my daughter," pleaded the colonel, in a trembling voice. "God knows her humiliation was greater, and I have suffered enough for her!"

"That is true," replied Mr. Arendell, compassionately, "and I will not forget that my son was the cause of at

least a part of your sorrow. This matter shall be mentioned no more between us. If Aldeane bears no animosity I am sure I have no wish to do so."

"Indeed I bear none," said Aldeane, earnestly. "My dearest wish is to see you inseparable friends, such as brothers should always be. I pity my uncle, and can not harbor ill feelings toward him."

The colonel regarded her gratefully. She leaned forward, and sealed her forgiveness with a kiss. "Be friends," she said, "firm friends, that in heart at least, can never again be separated!"

William Arendell extended his hand across the table; it was caught eagerly by the colonel, and Aldeane beheld with joy the true reconciliation of the long-estranged brothers.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER AT HOME.

AND thus, as a peacemaker, the life of Aldeane Arendell began, and her sojourn at Arendell House ended, for on the following morning, accompanied by his brother's family, Arthur, Mr. Ashton, and Charles Evans, William Arendell went to Grassmere, the home from which he had fled more than twenty years before.

Of his thoughts, as they passed over the well-remembered road, what can be said? Ah, nothing! nothing! though each heart can fancy them. Shame, grief, and triumph, all were there. Shame for a life which had not been without its stains; shame of the calumny which had blighted him; grief for that fair young creature that calumny had laid in an early grave, and triumph over that calumny refuted—that shame cast back upon its author. And there was pity too, pity for the suicide, and deeper still for him who had gone forth from the court-house a free man, but bowed down by a weight of infamy more terrible than a felon's heaviest chains.

He sat in the carriage, silent and motionless, seeming to see nothing but his daughter, who rode on horseback, beside the carriage, and from whom he could not for a moment remove his gaze. Frank, who had been summoned from school, and who had greeted Aldeane as his cousin with an outburst of joy, rode beside her, looking at her curiously from time to time, as if she had indescribably changed since he saw her last, as she undoubtedly

had in some points, which would not have been likely to claim the attention of her young admirer.

Aldeane had not been upon this road since she had accompanied George Raymond and Leonore to Grassmere. She thought how gayly they had sped over it with no thought of trouble or sorrow.

Frank, too, was thinking of it, for he rode close to Aldeane's side, and said in a low voice:—

"I know of what and of whom you are thinking. How little we thought that the merriest of the party would both, in little more than a year, be lying together in Loring graveyard! And how little any of us thought that both were so nearly related to you!"

"Great changes have indeed taken place since then," she answered, musingly, "in all save Grassmere! That remains the same as ever. Even the old trumpet-vine arbor seems in the same state of decay; no nearer its final dissolution than before."

They were approaching Grassmere, and she had ridden up quite close to the carriage. Her father heard her last words, and leaning out of the carriage, gazed earnestly upon the place where he was born, where he had lived for years, from which he had been driven forth in disgrace, and to which his heart had ever turned with deepest yearning during the dreary days of his exile.

"What!" he said, "then the old arbor is standing yet? Yes, and the lattice over which Alice trained clematis and roses still is there, but she is gone!"

He was overcome by painful recollections, and leaning back in the carriage, said no more until they stopped at the gate.

The negroes, with Aunt Samira and Uncle Jack at their head, were drawn up in gala array to receive them. It reminded Aldeane strongly of the first time she went there. But little then did they know that they were welcoming back the daughter of their rightful master to her

birthplace; but they knew it now, and a shout rent the air as Mr. Arendell descended from the carriage, and trembling with emotion, led Aldeane into the midst of the servants to receive with him their noisy welcome.

"Bress de Lord! Mass'r William, I jes' knowed you'd come back!" said Aunt Samira, fervently, "but 'twas too late for de poor boy, mass'r! too late for de poor boy!" and bursting into tears, she threw her apron over her head, and rushed into the kitchen.

Mr. Arendell seemed much disconcerted. "You do not utterly despise me," he queried of Aldeane, in a low voice, "when I tell you that I can not even now think of that child without the deepest emotion?"

"Oh, no," said Aldeane. "I loved him as a brother, and listened to his tale with all a sister's tenderness. Little did we think that the father of whom he spoke so lovingly was mine also!"

Mr. Arendell scarcely heeded her last words, so engrossed was he in returning the greetings and replying to the congratulations of his servants. Many remained that had served him personally; and their children, who until within a few hours had not known that such a man as William Arendell ever existed, were as enthusiastic as any in welcoming him back. They were all gathered upon the front lawn, and the family watched with great amusement their many antics. One little fellow seemed striving to out-do all the others. He would throw himself on the ground, and roll over and over on the soft grass, laughing the real "yhe-ho!" of a plantation negro at every turn, and the next he would be climbing like a monkey the highest branches of a tree, in order to excite the admiration of his master and mistress, and the envy of his sooty companions by his feats of agility.

Mr. Arendell, accompanied only by Aldeane, entered the house, and passed slowly through the well-remembered rooms.

"Ah!" he said, when they reached the library, "how many happy days I have spent in this room! Even in my bachelor days, when at home, it was my favorite resort; and after I was married, Alice generally used to sit in that window, with her basket of sewing or a favorite book, and I loved it for her sake, for where she was, was heaven to me. I think I see her now, sitting there in her little rocking-chair, with her golden curls sweeping back from her fair young face to the gently swaying motion of the rockers, her fingers busily engaged with some piece of delicate work, while she listened to some interesting book, read by the child at her feet. Though he was a slave, she admired his beauty and his strong intellect as much as if he had been of noble birth. How often, with unalloyed happiness, I looked upon them when thus engaged! Ah! how I loved them both!"

Mr. Arendell sat down, covering his face with his hands, as if he would fain call up again the beautiful vision; but he was unsuccessful. Scenes of troublous times glanced athwart his mind, and, with a sigh, he arose, and walked into the inner apartment.

Aldeane remembered that many sorrowful recollections must be connected with that also, so she refrained from following him, but sat down near one of the windows to await his return. Glancing at the book-shelves, she saw the plantation record which George Raymond had opened, and from which he had read the record of his own birth and that of his cousin and playmate, Abel. She remembered his strange questions, and the agitation of Aunt Samira, and wondered that she had not then suspected that he knew more of Grassmere than he was willing to acknowledge.

Mrs. Arendell entered the library.

"I see your father is in his old room," she said, "so I thought I should find you here. Come up-stairs with me, I want to show you your own chamber. I have had it

fitted up as well as it could be possibly done with such old furniture."

Aldeane arose and followed her. The room was large and airy. The long windows were curtained with lace dingy and yellow from age. The furniture was very old-fashioned and tarnished, though rich and heavy, and the faded blue curtains of the bed gave a melancholy hue to the whole. Aldeane thought of her pleasant room at Arendell House with a sigh. Mrs. Arendell noticed it.

"This," said she, drawing a small cushioned chair from the window recess, "was your mother's. Those drawings on the walls were executed by her; and though so faded, exhibit considerable talent. I had them placed here because I thought you would be pleased to see that that they have been so well preserved."

Aldeane looked at them with new interest. One of the pictures was a representation of the Virgin, a common subject, but the look of calm suffering and resignation on this, gave it a strange beauty. Aldeane thought of her mother, and that she also, in the days of her tribulation, might have worn that angelic expression.

"All this furniture is ancient," observed Mrs. Arendell. "A great deal of it, John says, was in the house when he was a child. It is too old and dingy, I know, to suit you, and I will send some for your use from our house."

"Pray, don't put yourself to that trouble," returned Aldeane. "It is not probable that we shall remain here long. Indeed, but for the sake of 'auld lang syne' father would not stay here at all. This old furniture has a charm for me. I shall not weary of it for the short time I am here."

"What shall we do when you have left us entirely?" asked Mrs. Arendell, with a sigh.

"Get another governess for the children," replied Aldeane, laughing.

"Ah! but that will not answer the purpose," Mrs. Arendell said, shaking her head sadly. "The loss to me will be greater than to the children. They will be sent to the best schools the State affords, and will probably receive as good instruction as you can give. But where shall I find another such friend?"

"Although I can not remain with you, I shall always be your friend," returned Aldeane, warmly. "But there is the dinner-bell." Then glancing at her watch, "Let us go down. I had no idea it was so late."

The gentlemen were waiting on the piazza upon which the dining-room opened. Mr. Arendell took Aldeane's hand, and led her into the apartment, and to the head of the table.

"Your mother occupied this place the last time I ate in this house," he said in a low tone. "Strive to do the honors as gracefully as she used to, and no more can be desired."

Aldeane blushing took the seat, and fulfilled her duties, as she did in every position, with the modest ease and grace that always distinguished her.

Aunt Samira had not forgotten the honors due from the culinary department. An excellent dinner was served in the best style, at which all did ample justice. It was a warm, close day, and after dinner all sought some cool spot in which to spend an hour in rest and quietness. Mr. Arendell went to the trumpet-arbor, and Arthur and Aldeane to the library.

"I wonder where uncle and aunt, and all the others, are?" said the latter.

"The gentlemen, I believe, are gone out on the lawn to have a quiet smoke under the great trees," returned Arthur. "Colonel Arendell, you know, is an inveterate smoker, and Mr. Ashton is not far behind him."

"Oh, dear! I shall be very glad when the sun sets; it is almost as warm as in August to-day," said Aldeane,

pushing back the hair from her brow, and plying a large palm-leaf fan; while Arthur, as he said, prepared to try the cooling effects of a cigar.

"I have left my guests to entertain themselves," said Aldeane, "but I presume they will enjoy a siesta much more than my company, so I'll devote a few minutes to you. It is the first opportunity I have had of doing so since your arrival. So you are really going on Monday?"

"Happily, yes," he returned. "I am heartily glad of it. You know I have been away from home more than a month!"

Aldeane laughed. "You need not think that Belle is inconsolable in your absence. No doubt, when you return you will find her as blooming as ever!"

"I hope so, indeed!" replied Arthur. "I think I see her blue eyes expanding with astonishment, as they surely will, when I shall relate the good fortune that has befallen you. I am truly afraid that her expressions of wonder and delight will never cease. I intend to surprise her entirely, and have not written a word to her on the subject."

"Nor have I," returned Aldeane. "I have been so much engaged and so agitated, that I have not been able to. I will write to-night, however, and constitute you my mail-carrier. Of course you will all remain at Grassmere until you leave for the North."

"Certainly! In fact, Mr. Ashton scarcely likes to return North at all without Uncle William. By the by, has he told you his secret?"

"Who? Mr. Ashton?"

"Yes. But I see he has not. Let me tell you, then, he is about to be married."

"To be married! Is it possible? Who to?"

"The mother of Gertie and Nettie Remsen, your old schoolmates. Nettie, you know, is married, and Gertie

well cared for, so he incurs no encumbrances in marrying the widow."

"I like the lady very much; but what does Belle say to it?"

"She is very much pleased. Indeed I even accuse her of projecting the match. Certain it is, that at all the little dinner-parties given at our house, Mrs. Remsen was sure to be invited and placed near Mr. Ashton. He will not leave Rose Cottage and come to live with us, and I suppose he thinks, as we do, that he will be much happier with a good wife than he is at present with a cross though faithful housekeeper. Though I presume Mrs. Roberts will still be retained in the house, for she has held sway there during the many years of his long widowerhood."

"I am truly glad he has decided to marry," said Aldeane. "I urged him to, before I left the North the last time. He laughingly said he would try to make a choice, and it seems he has succeeded. When is the happy event to take place?"

"Immediately after our return. Mrs. Remsen is renowned as a good housekeeper, and when you come North, he will no doubt welcome you in a more elegant style than usual. I may be able to do so also, as my enemy can do me no further harm."

"I hope, indeed, that you will prosper now," said Aldeane. "What a vindictive spirit Davis must have possessed to persecute you so, for the mere reason that he had conceived a dislike for you."

"He believed that I knew his secret," returned Arthur, "in which supposition he was perfectly correct, but it was harmless in my hands. Mother never told me the name of the man he had so deeply injured, and, beyond her simple assertion, I had no proof of the truth of her words. But there is an end and a punishment for all wickedness. To him it has come, and Blake is still insane. The phy-

sicians say there is but little hope that he will recover. His sister has decided to send him to the asylum, for although he has never yet shown symptoms of violence, she is in constant fear that he will."

"He has always looked as if he suffered remorse," said Aldeane, "and I do not now wonder at it, when I consider the horrible plot in which he took such an active part."

"What I wonder at most," replied Arthur, "is his impertinence in ever addressing you, or indeed, any other lady. I am in hopes, my dear," he continued, "that you have at last decided to settle near Boston. I know that your father has, but that has little to do with you."

The crimson blood rushed to Aldeane's face.

"Evans is a good man, a true friend, and he loves you devotedly!" continued Arthur.

Aldeane rose hastily, the color had all receded from her face. "Don't speak of it!" she said, entreatingly. "That can never be; I honor and esteem him, but no more!"

Arthur felt that she still loved another, and although he had set his heart upon her union with Charles Evans, said no more about it, but adroitly changed the subject.

The breath of evening swept through the branches of the trees, and moved the window-curtains, refreshing all things by its coolness, when they left the library. Aldeane went into the parlor, where she found Jessie crying bitterly because her mother had told her that it was nearly time for her to return home, and that she must leave Aldeane.

"I want you to go back with us," she sobbed; "it will be so lonely without you, with no one but papa and ma to speak to; for you know Eddie is going back to school with Frank."

Mrs. Arendell entered the room, and said, "Come, Jessie, dear, tea is ready: and we must start immediately after it.

We shall have such a nice ride home in the beautiful moonlight. You like that so much you know. Come, don't cry, Cousin Allie will come to see us very often, no doubt."

"Of course I shall!" said Aldeane. "But, aunt, why can't you let Jessie stay with me? You will be busy preparing the boys for school, and will not need her company half as much as I shall. Besides, you will not be able to send her to school yet, and she will lose so much if you allow her to stay at home doing nothing, if she is here I can still superintend her studies."

"You are still as kind and thoughtful as ever," returned Mrs. Arendell; while, springing up, Jessie threw her arms around her mother's neck, exclaiming:—

"Oh, may I stay? Please, let me stay! I won't be a bit of trouble, and will study ever so hard!"

"But, Aldeane, she will be homesick, and be so much trouble to you."

"Indeed, mamma, I will not."

"I do not fear that she will trouble me in the least," said Aldeane, smiling. "I promise to send her home as soon as she manifests any symptoms of it. And now, aunt, grant me one favor. Send up Jessie's trunk, and let her stay with me."

"Please, mother, do."

"I can not withstand you both. You know my weakness!" returned Mrs. Arendell, laughing, kissing first the blooming face of her daughter, and then the no less happy one of Aldeane.

Jessie's tears all vanished, and smiles usurped their place. Yet when, an hour afterward, she saw her father, mother, and brothers, depart, she felt almost like joining them. But Arthur challenged her to a race over the lawn, and she was soon leading him, at his quickest pace around the shrubbery, through which she nimbly ran, unheeding her pursuer's darts and turns to capture her, as she well knew he had but a slight chance of doing it.

Mr. Arendell and Mr. Ashton, through wreaths of cigar smoke, watched the race from the front piazza. Aldeane turned toward them saying:—

“That reminds me of the first day I ever spent at Rose Cottage, when Arthur, Belle, and I, ran across the meadow and came upon a snake. Oh! how Mrs. Roberts scolded us for bringing it home! And that was not the last scolding we received from her, either.”

“Doubtless you deserved them all!” returned Mr. Ashton gayly. “I don’t know what would have become of you, if you had not had her to correct you in my absence. She is even now invaluable.”

“Yes, I suppose so, but”—and Aldeane looked at him archly—“I hear that you are going to place another lady at the head of your household.”

Mr. Ashton laughed, to cover his momentary embarrassment. “I am sure Arthur has mistaken his vocation,” he said at last. “He would make an excellent town-crier. He would tell every one every thing without being paid for it. Allie, I tried to get you for a long time, but at last gave it up in despair! Of course you know who the lady is?”

“Yes, and I sincerely congratulate you on your excellent choice.”

“If I could only get Charley to take Gertie,” said Mr. Ashton, laughing, and glancing at Mr. Evans, “I should be perfectly happy. I am certain in my own mind that she likes him, and she would make him an excellent wife.”

Mr. Evans made no reply, but taking the cigar from his mouth, blew away the smoke, and leaning his arm on the balustrade, looked earnestly at Aldeane, as if waiting for her to speak.

She caught his glance fixed so eagerly upon her. For a moment she hesitated, and then said, steadily: “I think as you do, Mr. Ashton. Mr. Evans would insure his

happiness by marrying Gertie, provided she loves him. I should be delighted to hear of the event having taken place."

"It may be before any of you suspect," said Mr. Evans, rising, tossing his cigar among the bushes and hastily passing out to the lawn. "You have sealed my destiny forever, now!" he whispered to Aldeane, as he passed her.

"To tell the truth," said Mr. Ashton, "I was in hopes that you and Evans would fancy each other; but I always was a poor match-maker, and I suppose all my best-laid plans must fail. Oh, the perversity of human nature, especially when there's a woman in the case!"

"Allie, my child!" said Mr. Arendell, "now that I have found you, every one seems anxious to separate us again."

"But I shall not leave you, father!" she replied, laying her hand in his.

Mr. Ashton laughed. "I'll wager you a set of silver spoons that you are off in less than twelve months."

"I take up the wager!" cried Aldeane, gayly.

"And if you lose, what then?" asked her opponent.

"I will help your wife to correct you," returned Aldeane, "you need discipline now, very badly."

"That is true, Aldeane," said Arthur, coming toward them with Jessie screaming and struggling in his arms, yet carrying her as easily as if she had been an infant, and, as he told her, "still as a mouse."

"Uncle William make Mr. Guthrie put me down! Please take me away from him!" cried Jessie.

"Arthur, I'm ashamed of you! you're a pretty fellow to detain a lady against her will!" replied Mr. Arendell, lifting her from her high perch. "Where did he catch you, Jessie?"

"Out by that old trumpet-vine arbor you all pretend to like so much, while I think it is the dreariest place on

the whole plantation! I was going by there and saw Mr. Evans standing in it; I was frightened, and stopped for a moment, and Mr. Guthrie came up and caught me. I told him it wasn't fair, when he did it. Oh! dear, I am so tired!" and she sat down upon the steps, wearily.

Aldeane called to a servant to bring some water, and giving a glass to Jessie, said: "Come, little one, it is time for you to be in bed; I am tired myself, and know that you must be."

"Why, Aldeane, you are not going to retire so early!" exclaimed Arthur. "It is not yet quite ten o'clock."

"Nevertheless, you gentlemen must permit me to go. I know Jessie would be frightened alone in that still chamber."

"Let Amelia stay with her."

Aldeane shook her head. "That is against my creed, Arthur. I want Jessie to dismiss her waiting-maid at night, they need better rest than a pallet on the floor affords."

"A Yankee, every inch!" exclaimed Mr. Arendell, laughing.

"No, the daughter of a true Southerner!" she returned. "Come, Jessie, I believe you are almost asleep now."

She very willingly said "good-night!" and followed Aldeane up-stairs, and although she shrank back at sight of the high, old-fashioned bed, she was soon sleeping as calmly on it as if in her own little cot at home.

Aldeane drew forth the little chair from the window recess and placing her desk upon a low table, seated herself before it and began to write. A long letter to Belle, such as she used to write when she first came South, but for which, since trouble and care had come, she had had neither time nor inclination, was the result. When she had completed it, she went to the window to catch a breath of the cool air of midnight. She saw the dim outlines of the figures of two gentlemen upon the piazza,

and the crimson tops of their cigars, and heard the faint hum of voices.

"Tobacco—how potent is thine influence! how powerful over the minds of men!" she murmured, smiling quietly. "Ah, they are talking of me!" She bent forward and discovered that Mr. Ashton and her father were alone.

"I am certain he loved her!" said the former.

"And do you think that he does, still?" asked Mr. Arendell.

"Most assuredly! Beauty and wealth seek to dazzle him in vain! He still loves, and is waiting for Aldeane!"

Aldeane closed the blinds, and sank upon a chair, not waiting, or even wishing, to hear more.

"Loving, and waiting! loving, and waiting, as I have been for years!" she murmured. "Thank God! he is loving and waiting—faithful still!"

She heard the two chairs on the piazza pushed back hastily, and the door closed loudly as the gentlemen entered the house. Mr. Ashton went into the room allotted to him, and her father to the library, where she heard him for some time pacing the floor heavily. She listened, hoping to hear him cease, but at last half-terrified by the strange thoughts that crowded her mind, she gathered her white dressing robe around her, and ran lightly down the stairs, and opened the library door. Her father turned quickly as she entered.

"Child! what is the matter?" he exclaimed, "how wild and specter-like you look. Are you frightened at being alone in this old house?" He folded her in his arms, kissing her tenderly.

"No, no!" she replied, "but it made me feel so sad to hear you keeping your lone vigil, here in the darkness! Will you not try to rest? I know you are weary!"

"Child, I am strong to-night," he answered dreamily. "For years I have been weary of life; now I can look

forward to enjoying the remnant of my days. Your mother has been with me to-night. I see her everywhere. She haunts Grassmere!"

Aldeane glanced around a little fearfully, clinging still closer to her father.

"Not in bodily form does she come, Aldeane. She is here, here in my heart! Ah! my wife! my angel wife!"

"Strive to be happy without her!" murmured Aldeane. "Remember that I—her daughter, and yours—am with you."

"I do remember it, and the knowledge fills my heart with joy, but can ever a daughter's love fill the place of such innocence and beauty as this?"

He drew her beneath the lamp suspended from the center of the room, took from his bosom a small miniature, attached to a hair chain, and gazing at it a moment almost reverently, placed it in his daughter's hand.

By the pale light of the single lamp, Aldeane beheld the portrait of her mother. A face beaming with every tint of health and beauty, and with a rarely sweet expression, looked forth from a mass of golden curls, the truthful blue eyes seemed to look steadily and lovingly into those bending over her.

"Beautiful! mother!" sobbed Aldeane, and with a gush of tears she laid her head upon her father's bosom murmuring: "I can comprehend your loss now. But, remember that she is with the angels watching our career with anxious gaze. Let us strive to join her."

Mr. Arendell kissed her tenderly. "Go, now, my daughter," he said. "I feel better for having spoken of her. I can sleep now, and you must also, your eyelids are drooping sadly."

Aldeane kissed him again, and with his silent, but fervent blessing resting upon her, went up-stairs as noiselessly as she had descended.

Total silence soon after brooded over Grassmere.

Late on Sunday afternoon, Mr. Ashton, Mr. Evans, and Arthur, left Grassmere to go to Arendell House, in order to take the stage at Loring early the following day.

"Poor Arthur!" said Mr. Ashton, laughing, as they stepped into the carriage. "He hasn't seen his wife for ages. Dreadful! isn't it? I wish I could hire a pair of wings for him somewhere. I would invite you both to my wedding, but I know you won't come. But I give you a standing and staying invitation, to visit us when you come North. Don't let it be long before you come, either!"

Mr. Evans bowed low over Aldeane's hand at parting, looked at her sorrowfully a moment, then stepped into the carriage, and it was driven rapidly away. She caught a glimpse of a white handkerchief fluttering from the window, answered it by a wave of her hand, and the next moment the party were out of sight.

During the fall and winter, the time passed rapidly and pleasantly at Grassmere. Aldeane was fully employed in her housekeeping duties, and in teaching Jessie, who remained with her. She went home several times, and stayed a few days, but was always glad to return to her studies, and Aldeane's pleasant society.

Aldeane had once gone with her father to the cemetery at Linden, a village some few miles distant, where a marble shaft arising from the midst of profuse shrubbery distinguished her mother's grave from the numbers around it. She fulfilled the sad, yet pleasing duty of planting flowers upon the grass-covered mound, and returned home, saddened by her visit, yet happy in the thought that her uncle had not suffered her mother to rest in an unmarked grave.

As soon as it was known that Aldeane was the daughter of William Arendell, she was invited most urgently into society, being mostly courted by those who had slighted her when she was simply a governess. She

accepted the invitations of those only who had always been her friends, and thus passed an almost secluded life within the precincts of Grassmere. Letters from the North bore the glad tidings of Arthur's prosperity. Mr. Ashton was married, and it was rumored that Mr. Evans and Gertrude Remsen were about to be. Aldeane rejoiced at this, and hoped that they would be united before she went North, for which the appointed time was rapidly approaching. The beautiful spring days had come. All the negroes that chose to leave had been sent to good homes prepared for them. Colonel Arendell had taken formal possession of Grassmere, and nothing remained for Aldeane to do but to bid it farewell and go to Arendell House, where she was to remain for a few days previous to her departure for the North.

This, to her, was no very grievous task, but her father felt it bitterly. Each nook and corner of the old place was dear to him. Some weeks before he left he tenderly transplanted a root of the trumpet-vine, intending, if possible, to cultivate it at the North. He took it from what was, to him, hallowed ground, and cherished it as his dearest treasure. Aldeane carefully packed many of the drawings that her mother had executed, looking upon them as dear relics of the past.

Frank and Eddie had returned home for the spring vacation, and on the last evening of Aldeane's stay they went with her to Loring to visit Leonore's grave. A few early flowers were lifting their tiny heads above it. Aldeane gathered a few, and, with periwinkle and cypress, wove a chaplet, which she hung upon the monument as a last token of her unceasing grief and love.

She looked with new interest upon Raymond's grave. Her father, she knew, had been there, for on the side of the tablet was written in pencil in his hand, "Out of the depths hast Thou called his spirit."

She left the quiet grave-yard, feeling that it was, per-

haps, the last time she should ever tread within its hallowed precincts. She had lingered so long that the gray light of evening was brooding over the earth, half hiding every object in its misty folds, ere she reached Arendell House. Mrs. Arendell met her at the garden gate, and hurried her into the house to dress for the company that was to meet her for the last time.

A farewell party always possesses some elements of gloom. Sighs unbidden will often mingle with the gayest strains of music or laughter, and check the gay repartee. So was it at this time. Mrs. Arendell had been very careful in the selection of her guests. None but those who had always treated Aldeane with kindness were invited, and with many she felt truly sorry to part. It was the first time that the parlor had been filled with company since Leonore's death, and all seemed to remember it, for the voices were subdued, and many mentioned her. At an early hour the guests took their departure, leaving the family to the quiet enjoyment of the last hours of the night. One o'clock had just struck when Aldeane retired, not to sleep, but to weep bitterly at the thought that she was about to leave, perhaps forever, a home that she loved so dearly from the very sorrows connected with it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

AND the week later she was the mistress of a second Grassmere, which was situated midway between Rose Cottage and Boston, and was, as far as moderate wealth and rare tastes could make it, a model of elegance. Mr. Arendell's sole care was to place his daughter in a home worthy of her, though he contended that such a one could never be gained, and laughingly feared that however charming might be the nest he should make for her, she would flit to another.

To this Aldeane made no reply. How could she, when she remembered with what unacknowledged hopes she had hastened North? when she remembered one welcome she had expected and received not—still received not, though long weeks had passed by and she had grown heartsick with “hope deferred?” She could not, strive as she would, forget that Frederic Morgan was free to seek her, that he had once told her that he loved her. And now, now he came not, nor sent one word of welcome or congratulation. His mother, indeed, had come, but her visit had only deepened Aldeane's disappointment—a disappointment which she blushed to own, yet over which she shed many bitter tears.

The season was very gay, and introduced by Mrs. Ashton, she went everywhere, and more, perhaps, from the romantic story attached to her than from her beauty, she became an acknowledged belle, and the life and pride of her circle. She everywhere heard of Doctor Morgan, for

he had gained a local reputation in his profession. But it had seemed fated that they should not meet, for many times she had entered Belle's house a few moments after he had left it, and more than once he had dropped in for an instant at an evening party just before her entrance or after her departure.

Undoubtedly she was piqued as well as grieved by his strange conduct toward her, but the former was the only feeling she allowed to escape her, even to Belle, who now, in all the dignity of maternity added to wifehood, and with the prudence of an elderly match-maker, catechised Aldeane upon the advantages or disadvantages to be gained by the encouragement of her numerous admirers, and shrewdly feigned to ignore the knowledge upon which, to Arthur, she had long plumed herself, and upon which was still founded the dearest wish of her heart; for, as she truly said, she had now no cares of Arthur's to perplex her, as his success in his profession since the exposure and death of his old enemy, had been unparalleled, and now bade fair to make him in time a wealthy man, even though he should discard any other fortune that might fall to him, as he had done that of his unworthy step-father, which he had suffered to enrich a score of poor relations who had discarded Jonas Davis years before, but who, at the cry of gold, sprang into being to own themselves his nearest, dearest kin.

And so, Arthur being "off her mind," Belle must needs "take Aldeane on," and Frederic Morgan too, of whom she saw much, and could satisfy herself but little. She talked to him in the severest manner of his neglect of his old friend, but could gain nothing from him but that his time was much occupied, that he had no time for formal calls, and other excuses of a like nature, always ending with the declaration, that he should call soon, very soon.

And so Belle, who conjectured every thing, and said

even more than prudence dictated, effected nothing, while in course of time one who conjectured comparatively little, chanced to say the very words which she had been seeking in vain.

The winter had unmistakably begun his reign, although it was yet early in November, when one day Mr. Ashton and his wife sat in their comfortable sleigh being rapidly driven toward Grassmere, there to celebrate the birthday of Mr. Arendell.

"My dear," remarked Mrs. Ashton, in a pause made by her husband in an earnest eulogy of his friend, "have you noticed how pale and restless, if not absolutely ill, Aldeane has appeared lately. I really fear she has some secret trouble preying upon her mind."

"Nonsense," returned Mr. Ashton. "I am sure she looked the very pink of health and beauty the last time I saw her. I think Gertie's woes before Charley owned himself a captive, have made you a little sentimental." And Mr. Ashton laughing heartily, dismissed the subject, and the next moment, exclaimed:—

"Why there's Morgan upon his splendid bay. That fellow lives on horseback, I believe. Hullo, doctor, where are you going, now?"

The young doctor drew rein, and saluted Mrs. Ashton and his old friend, coloring somewhat, as the latter exclaimed:—"And you don't look well either! What is the matter with *you*?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he muttered, confusedly. "I have been working a little harder than usual, lately, I believe."

"Then, I should advise you to take a little rest," said Mr. Ashton, gayly; "we will not allow you to be a slave, or a recluse any longer. Of course, Belle has told you, that you will be expected at the wedding. Charley has always declared he wouldn't be married without you were at hand."

"I—I did not understand—Mrs. Guthrie has told me nothing," faltered Doctor Morgan, turning very pale. "Char—Charley will certainly excuse me—I—I."

"Well, if Charley will, Gertie certainly will not," interrupted Mr. Ashton.

"Gertie!" gasped Dr. Morgan, as if in the greatest surprise, and actually springing from his horse to grasp Mr. Ashton's hand, and sinking into the deep snow without appearing to mind it in the least. "Is it Gertie Remsen that is to be married to Charley Evans?"

"I hope, sir," said Mrs. Ashton, with much stateliness, "that you were not misled by an absurd rumor that was for a little time afloat. My dear, Mr. Ashton, what are you laughing at? I assure you I consider this very annoying, indeed."

But Mr. Ashton, who had thrown himself back in his sleigh in a paroxysm of laughter, laughed louder than before, and with infinitely more enjoyment as he saw Doctor Morgan, without a word more, vault into his saddle, and ride at the greatest speed of the splendid bay, in the direction of Grassmere.

Of all the days that Aldeane had passed there, she was expecting him least upon this, for her mind was occupied by the responsibility of properly receiving and entertaining a large party which were to meet at dinner a few hours later.

Arthur, Belle, and (according to the declarations of both, and the belief of Aldeane) the most wonderful baby that ever was born, were already there, Arthur, with Mr. Arendell in the library, and Belle in an upper room where Aldeane had left her; in order to give one glance at the drawing-rooms before the company should arrive, when a ring at the bell startled her, and a minute later the sound of her own name uttered in a voice she well remembered, caused her to sink upon a chair, pale and breathless, as the drawing-room door was

thrown open, and Frederic Morgan hastily advanced toward her.

She endeavored to rise and greet him calmly, but if all her future happiness had depended upon it, she could not have done so. Fortunately the lack of ceremony served only to her advantage, for Frederic Morgan saw at once that there was no need of words, save those in which he explained his late conduct. "I heard you were engaged to Evans, and dared not come!" and with an outburst of triumphant love and joy, clasped her in his arms.

How very soon afterward the company began to arrive. First, there were Mr. and Mrs. Ashton, full of significance and mystery, and pretending, like Belle and Arthur, to have no idea of what had occurred, and kindly combining to keep any thought of it from Mr. Arendell until all could be fully explained; also Charles Evans and his very lovely *fiancée*, neither of whom appeared to attach any particular importance to the conjectures whispered by Mrs. Ashton; and besides these, a host of acquaintances; more than one of whom noticed the agitation neither could entirely conceal, and opined that Doctor Morgan and Miss Arendell would make a "magnificent couple."

And a few months after, when Mr. and Mrs. Charles Evans were spoken of as the happiest of married folks, Doctor Morgan and Miss Arendell did indeed make the "magnificent couple" that had been prophesied of. There was a quiet wedding, with but few to witness it. But those few were the dearest and best: Colonel and Mrs. Arendell, with their family; Mr. and Mrs. Guthrie, good Mr. Ashton and his wife, with Charles Evans and his young bride, with a few others whose friendship had brightened Aldeane's life when she was a poor governess, as gladly as when she was the heiress of William Arendell, and the bride of that most popular of physicians, Frederic Morgan.

"My love," he said, as they sat together, in the drawing-room, upon the night he took her to her home; "my love, this reminds me of the conversation I held with Annie upon this very spot, so long ago; and I think, my darling, it is here she would like you to read a little note she left for me to give the woman of my love if she should ever be my wife. I know, my own, you have in your heart naught but kindness for her memory, and will gently judge what she has written here."

He placed a tiny note in her hand, and would have left her, but she clasped his hand and bade him stay, and with his arm around her, she read the message of his first wife. The very paper it was written on—so tiny and delicately tinted—was characteristic of Annie Greyson no less than the few quaintly written words.

"My dear," it began, "I do not know your name, but I mean this for the lady Frederic loves, and whom I am sure he will marry when I am gone. I feel now as if I had done wrong ever to separate you, but I didn't like to be laughed at, and I was sure Fred would make me happy, and I was over twenty, and didn't like the idea of remaining single all my life. I'm sure you will forgive me. Won't you? And I do hope that both you and Fred will think kindly of her who, when you read this, will be poor, dead

ANNIE."

Aldeane sobbed heartily over this quaint little note, and Frederic Morgan, while he endeavored to soothe her, thought with tender pity of her whom he had once almost hated, and Aldeane, knowing this, was glad he had not seen the postscript which was written on another page, and afterward met her eye, and which in spite of her will recalled to her mind the olden feeling of pitying contempt. "My dear," this said, "if you are fair, have the drawing-room curtains changed by all means. I found that heavy green very trying, and should recommend light blue."

Aldeane lives at Morganvale still—a happy wife and mother, beautiful even now in the eyes of her fond husband, and father, and those of a score of loving friends, even though she receives them beneath the shadow of the green curtains. And still the Peacemaker, she is beloved by rich and poor throughout the neighborhood which deems itself blessed by the kindness and skill of the good doctor.

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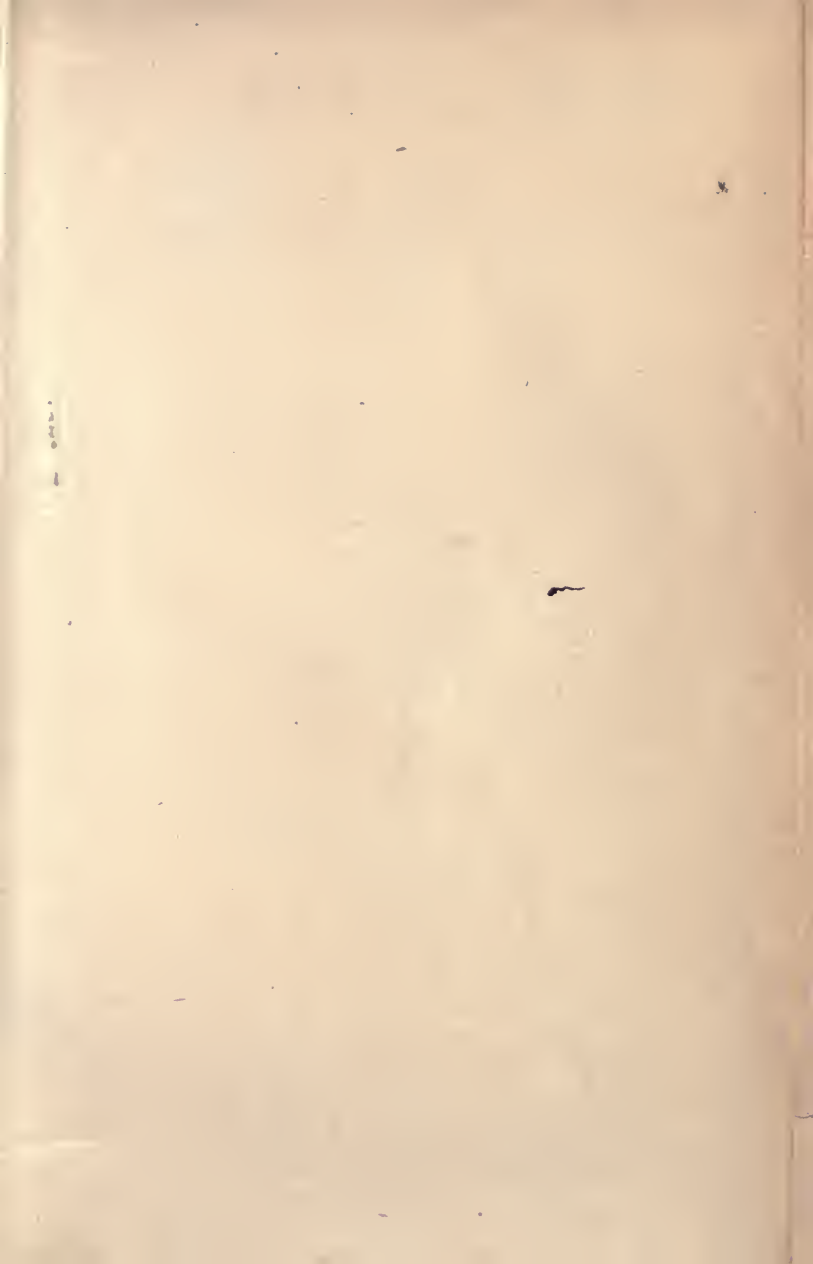
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